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One God - Many Faces in the Bible

Edited by:
Augustine Mulloor

Malloossery P.O.,
Kottayam - 686 041
Kerala, India
Tel: (91) (481) 2392530, 5532406
Mob: 9249410650
E-mail: ktm_jeeva123@sancharnet.in
Web: www.jeevadhara.org

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Editorial

Hermann Häring, speaking about the relevance of negative Theology, refers to the come back of the basic experience of the ineffable and alien at four points: "Within faith and religion the experience of a God who keeps withdrawing himself, under the influence of science and technology symbols and codes in which 'God' become superfluous or is imperceptibly volatilized; in western culture an understanding of reality in which the question of "God" has no place; in our present-day societies, conditions which indicate more of God's impotence than of God's goodness" (*Concilium* 2001/1, 142-143). On the one side people live as though they can manage without God and on the other there is so much God-talk around. There is so much of irreligious and secular situation, yet there are too many Gods and religions here, sensual religions, rational religions and even spiritual religions. In fact, it is not secularization, but the presence of too many gods, that makes the crucial problem of today. Hence the solution is to move towards the ideal and correct image of God and an authentic religiosity that helps everyone transcend oneself.

Biblical revelation of God is multidimensional yet all the faces and dimensions converge on a particular point. Hence biblically, God is one but with many faces. This is an attempt to study a few of the multiple aspects of the image of God in view of making our God-Talk free from hypocrisy and irrelevance.

Ivo Da Souza, Hemraj Shilanand, Jacob Prasad and Augustine Mulloor explore Biblical revelation of one God experienced as King liberator, lover, judge and Father. The reflections bring to focus the fact that God cannot be ignored and that God cannot be contained by us; yes, God must remain an experience and a mystery, an experience in his many faces, a mystery in his oneness. We must let God-Talk continue, but in an authentic way.

Augustine Mulloor

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God's Kingdom: Biblico-Existential Perspectives

Ivo da Conceicao Souza

This is a major theme in the Biblical tradition and is very much related to the theme of the covenant. The Kingdom of God is the essence of the teaching of Jesus in the synoptic tradition. John gives very much importance to Jesus' identity as King. The author explores this as far as the book of Revelation. Prof. Dr. Ivo has been teaching biblical exegesis and sociology since 1978 in the Patriarchal Seminary of Rachol.

Introduction

The concept of *kingdom* and *kingship* is today obsolete. We can imagine kings (*rajas* and *maharajas*), with their show-off of power, wealth and glamour. Times are gone when kings were ruling their subjects and battling to spread their territorial kingdom over the earth. Kings belong to the past, as an institution. There are today a few nominal "*kings*" or "*monarchs*", who, in reality, are *constitutional figure-heads*. Today we think in terms of neo-colonialism, globalization, hegemony of patent rights. We are all longing for a liberated, renewed "*kingdom*", a "*revolution of love*".

I shall dwell on the theme of God's Kingdom, from the biblical perspective, by delving into the biblical texts dealing with "*kingship*" and "*kingdom*", and then draw conclusions from the existential dimensions.

1.1: The Concept of Kingdom and Its Terminology

The English word "*kingdom*" refers to the territory, where the King exercises his power, whereas the Greek term *basileia* (and the

corresponding Semitic counterparts, Hebrew *malekuth* and Aramaic *malekhuta*, means primarily the *state of being a king* (or kingship), or to the *exercise of royal power* (sovereignty, reign, rule, dominion, dignity), and only secondarily the realm of territory. The cognate words are *malak*, “to reign”, and *melek*, “king”.

If we pay attention to the Lord’s Prayer, the petition “*Thy Kingdom come!*” will clarify and confirm its meaning, namely it does not refer to a *territory*, but to a *reign* that may come to pass. It is not an area, it cannot be identified with the Church in its geographical and numerical extension, as when we say: “*to spread the Kingdom of God*”. It is a *quality of existence* rather than a *territory*, that could be covered by a flag.

1.2: The meaning of Kingdom and Kingship

King is a *sovereign ruler who exercises authority over a defined territorial area (or state)*. The title may be purely or partially hereditary, or elective. The king acts as a *central symbol* for the territory and population over which he rules. It symbolizes its prosperity, fertility, and security. Kingship refers variously to the rank, authority, office and dignity of the king, including the exercise of power over the subjects of the state. *Kingship in Israel* has shaped the history and the traditions, now preserved in the Hebrew Bible. It has had also a profound impact on the religious and secular history of Israel as well as on the people, on the community as well as on its religious and literary traditions, and messianic beliefs. It left an indelible mark upon the religious traditions of humankind.

Monarchy is the most common form of government in agrarian societies throughout history. The development of the state with the king as the central symbolic figure represents a major stage in the evolution of political systems. The king was responsible for the maintenance of law and order within a defined territory, through the use of a professional and permanent military force and a dedicated central bureaucracy. Bureaucracy was modelled upon Egyptian patterns.

2.1: Kingdom of God in the First Testament

The unifying theme of the Bible is the Kingdom of God—God’s perfect and undisputed rule over all that he has created. As we have seen, the word “*kingdom*” here means “*kingly rule*” or “*reign*” rather than “*territory ruled by a king*”.

We find God as King of Israel in numerous biblical traditions (Dt 33:5; Jdg 8:23; Is 43:15). The author of the books of Chronicles refers to the Davidic throne as God's Kingdom (1 Chr 17:14; 28:5; 29:11).

In the Psalms, the idea of the kingdom plays an important role, but its function there is *primarily devotional*—that is, to provide *images suitable for praising God*—and the conception is much more fluid than in the prophets and apocalyptic writers. Sometimes Yahweh is spoken of as *king of the gods* (eg. 95:3; cf. 82:1), sometimes as *king of all nations* (eg. 47:2.7.8), sometimes only as *king of Israel* (eg. 149:2). The “*Enthronement Psalms*” (93; 95-99) emphasize his present sovereignty over all creation, as well as his future coming to judge the earth (96:13; 98:9; cf. Ps 94). More important than the question of the *extent of God's kingdom in space* is the question of its *location in time*, whether it is to be regarded as a *present fact* or as a *future expectation*. In developed Jewish and Christian thought the idea of the kingdom is used in both senses. Because God is the omnipotent *creator of all* he must even now—at least potentially—be the *king of all*. But since at present his sovereignty seems to be *widely flouted*, there is another sense in which he will ascend to the *throne of his kingdom* only in the future.

“*God is king*”: This was the feature of an annual feast of Yahweh's enthronement, celebrated in pre-exilic Israel, during which God was believed ceremonially to reenact the drama of creation and each year re-ascend to the throne of the Universe for the coming twelve months.

2.2: From Creation to the End-Time

The First Testament begins with the *story of creation*: The opening eleven chapters of Genesis are like ‘*ouverture*’ of the biblical symphony—they are not a record of scientific and historical events, but are a narrative of God's love, of his royal and loving rule over wayward Man and the other recalcitrant forces in his creation. They are a prelude to the salvation history.

The first chapter of Genesis tells us how God out of *formless chaos* (*tohu-wa-bohu*) brought the Universe into existence as a *cosmos*, and declared that it was “*very good*” (Gn 1:31). With a powerful word God brings into existence the Universe out of chaos. Whereas the Yahwistic author emphasizes God's providence, the Priestly narrative focuses on his power. At that moment, ideally speaking, the *Kingdom of God* was established. The author symbolically affirms Israel's faith in one God

who is the Lord of all that there is, the King of the Universe. Here there is implicit *covenant of God with Man*. Man shares in God's kingship when he names the animals, since naming in the ancient world meant not only to know something intimately, but also to have a hold on it—Man has authority over animals.

But the First Testament goes on almost immediately to describe how the Kingdom was disrupted through the disobedience of the first couple (Gn 3:1-24). Thus, the *theme* of the kingdom—its founding, disruption and restoration—is an overarching topic, which extends from the first chapters of the Genesis to the last chapters of Revelation. It is this conception of the kingdom that gives *unity* to the Bible and *significance* to its various parts. The first Christians saw their own story simply as the *climax* and *conclusion* of the history of God's Kingdom, which had begun in the First Testament. It is against this background that the words of Jesus must be understood, namely "*The Kingdom of God is at hand*" (Mk 1:15), the epitome of his preaching. These words form an inclusion with the end of the story, found in the last book of the Bible, proclaimed by the chorus: "*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever*" (Rev 11:15).

This *theological view* is the result of a long process of Israel's growing reflection on the meaning of her election and her covenant with God.

Let us turn now to the historical question: Where did the conception of God's rule as a "*kingdom*" come from, and when? What was the origin of this concept?

It is true that Yahweh has always been regarded as the *ultimate source of all authority*—at least in theory. But when did the people of Israel first begin to conceive of God as a "*king*" and of his rule as a "*kingdom*"?

While answering this question, we can focus on another point, namely what was the extent of Yahweh's dominion, whether called a "*kingdom*" or not? Was it only over the nation of Israel, over humankind in general, over other gods, or over the created Universe? Was it in the past, in the present or yet to be achieved in the future?

2.3: In the pre-Monarchic Period

It is a commonplace of present-day scholarship that Israel before the rise of monarchy was organized in the form of an *amphictyony*—

sacred confederacy of tribes constituted for the purpose of supporting a religious shrine. (While this is merely a theory, based primarily on the analogy to the Greek amphictyonies, and the evidence is indirect and *not necessarily conclusive*, it may be accepted as a *working hypothesis*). What is perfectly certain is that the *bond of unity* among the Hebrew tribes was a *religious* one; their association was based, not on common "*nationality*" (or the occupation of a common territory), but on a *common devotion to the God Yahweh*.

In a profound sense, the *Israelite confederacy* was the *first historical manifestation of the Kingdom of God*. From this small group of relatively uncultured tribes, united solely by their *loyalty to Yahweh*, there ultimately developed the hope of God's one day bringing the whole *disordered Universe into conformity with his Will*. On the level of historical fact the original nucleus of the idea of the kingdom is to see here not merely the beginning of the idea of the kingdom but also the inception of the *actual historical process* in which God has *ever since been at work* to establish his kingdom.

But it seems unlikely that the conception of the kingdom of God in the sense of political rule over Israel existed at this early period, during the period of the confederacy in Palestine (the age of the "*judges*") or the preceding period of life in the desert.

2.4: During and after the Monarchy

The establishment of the kingdom of Israel under Saul, David, and Solomon provided the political and cultural background that made possible in the long run the flowering of the idea of the kingdom of God. We have to remark that insofar as Yahweh was given the title of "*king*", it was probably only as king of the gods or the forces of nature rather than as heavenly monarch of an earthly realm. Actually the first direct evidence of even this idea of kingship comes from Isaiah in the latter part of the 8th century.

Monarchy had a tremendous impact on the idea of the kingdom of God after it had disappeared. When there was no longer a human king sitting on the throne, men of Israel began to think of God as their king. Israel, being tribal and democratic, would feel monarchy as an alien importation. The passing of the earthly monarchy would incline them to think more favourably of the idea of a heavenly monarchy.

2.5: God's Rule over Israel

Israel's religion had a strong social character, it was corporate, it was a religion concerned with the life of the group rather than with the life of the individuals. To put it more accurately, it was concerned with individual life only as seen in the context of a particular society—Israel. The idea of the kingdom of God is one way of expressing this sense of human's social relationship to God. She was a kingdom under the dominion of Yahweh, seen no longer merely as king in heaven but as king of Israel.

2.6: The Concept of the Messiah

The second contribution of the kingdom on earth was the figure of the Messiah, the "*Anointed One*". In adopting the title "*king*" for her ruler, Israel of necessity took over with it a whole complex of associated ideas from neighbouring cultures. Among these was the belief in the divinity of kings. The king of Israel was regarded, at least in court circles, as a superhuman figure (cf. Ps 45:6, where the king is called "*god*"). At any rate he was God's adopted "*son*", charged with carrying out God's Will (2 Sm 7:14; Pss 2:7; 89:27; cf. Ps 110). Through him the prayers of the people ascended to God, and God's blessings flowed to the people (2 Sm 14:17; 23:4; Ps 72:6; Lam 4:20). His most characteristic and instructive title was "*the anointed of the Lord*"—he possessed a divine charisma through the act of anointing (1 Sm 10:1; 16:13). It was this conception of kingship that provided the soil from which the idea of the Messiah was eventually to grow.

The Messiah is the divine or semi-divine king transferred from the field of present experience to that of future expectation. But people were disappointed with many of the monarchs—*misfits and worse*—who sat on the throne of David. They could not fulfill the promises given in such grandiloquent language at their birth or coronation (cf. Ps 2; 45; 72; 110; Is 9:6-7). There was gradual decline in the power and prosperity of the Hebrew kingdoms. This led the nation to transfer its hopes to an ideal king of the future. This tendency was finally crystallized by the extinction of the earthly monarchy in 586 BCE. The actual phrase, "*the kingdom of God/Lord*", is found for the first time in 1 Chr 28:5: "*He has chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel*". The idea of the kingdom of God would become a framework for the truths of biblical religion, but the

notion of divine rule had to be disentangled from all national, territorial and dynastic limitations. This would be the task or special function of the great radical prophets.

3.1: Prophetic Critique

The first occurrence of the idea that God is king can be dated with certainty in Is 6:5, where the prophet declares: "*My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!*" Theological emphasis on Yahweh's kingship dates only from this time, originating partly, in a polemic against other gods who were called kings. especially Molech, "*King*", (an intentional distortion of *Melech*, "*King*". cf. 1 Kg 11:7; 2 Kg 23:10). It is certainly primarily in the books of the great prophets that we must trace the full development of the idea of the kingdom of God.

3.2: *The pre-exilic prophets*

Before the Exile the mention of kingship is infrequent. The conception of God's kingship seems as yet underdeveloped. The idea of kingship would become far more attractive after the Exile. It was the prophets who first made it clear that God's rule is not to be confused with the fortunes of the Israelite kingdoms. From the pre-exilic prophets it is clear the kingdom of God demands moral obedience: "*Thy kingdom come!*" His kingdom is also universal, he is not merely King of Israel but a universal King.

3.3: *Exilic and Post-exilic Prophets*

With the destruction of the kingdom of Judah, and only after the Exile, the idea of the kingdom of God became a commonplace of OT thought. Even under the monarchy Yahweh's kingship had been understood chiefly as his heavenly dominion over other celestial beings. This idea was not lost in the exilic and post-exilic periods. Further, since it was obvious that God's rule was not universally acknowledged, even among the people of Israel, the belief in a full realization of the kingdom was transferred to a later date, when a new act of God would establish it. That is, the idea of the kingdom became *eschatological*—looking toward the final end of history. Some passages, taking over the message of the great pre-exilic prophets (vg. Is 2:6-21; Zeph 1:2-3:11), speak of a coming judgment of the wicked as a prelude to the establishment of God's righteous rule (Is 33:7-16; 66:15-16; Ez 38-39; Joel 3:9-15.19; Mal-3:1-5). According to Zech (2:10-11; 8:20-23) the

recognition of Yahweh's goodness will be widespread among the Gentiles, so that many will join themselves voluntarily to the people of Israel (cf. Is 2:1-4, which may also be post-exilic) and God will have *universal dominion* (eg. Is 45:23-56:7). Jeremiah spoke for the first time in the First Testament of a "*new covenant*" (Jr 31:31-34; cf. 1 Cor 11:23; 2 Cor 3:6), while after twenty years, Ezekiel proclaimed the *eschatological outpouring of the Spirit* (Ez 36:23-28; Joel 3:1-5; cf. Acts 2:16-21). And Trito-Isaiah promises that there will be a *new creation*, for God will "*create new heavens and a new earth*", where life will be lived under idyllic conditions (Is 65:17-25). In this period we have also the conception of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh (Is 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). The servant is, in some sense, a "*historical*" figure and can be connected with the OT hope for the kingdom only in the most general way, as being God's agent to bring "*justice*" and "*law*" to the earth (42:4), "*light to the nations*" (49:6), and through his death justification to "*many*" (53:11-12).

Likewise, for the prophets God was *ruler over nations*. He would devastate foreign nations for violating the *covenant of brotherhood* (Amos 1:3-2:3), but he would also punish Israel and Judah for breaking covenant (Amos 2:4-3:2; Is 10:1-11). There would be a "*new covenant*" between God and his people (Ho 2:16-20; Jr 31:31-34; cf. Ez 36:27-32), peace among all the nations (Is 2:2-4; 19:19-25) and among all the living beings (Ho 2:18; Is 11:6-9; 65:17-25). Such hopes, however, were not fulfilled during the biblical period.

Second Isaiah (Dt-Is 40-55) sought to *comfort the exiles* by assuring them that their time of punishment was over since they had received double for their sins (Is 40:2). For centuries, foreign nations continued to dominate the Jewish people and their homeland. No longer was it clear that God ruled the kingdoms of the earth—prophets and others promised and longed for the future coming of God's kingdom or rule on earth (Dan 2:44; 4:17; Hag 2:20-23; Zech 14:9) (Cf. Peter Huenermann, "Reign of God", *Sacramentum Mundi*. An Encyclopedia of Theology, vol.5, 1989, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, pp.233-240)

4.1: Kingdom of God in the Second Testament

The theme of *Kingdom of God* is central in the Synoptic Gospels. Mk uses it fourteen times and Lk thirty-two times. Mt has it four times only, but he replaces it thirty-five times by the equivalent "*Kingdom of*

heaven". In Pauline literature, the phrase "*Kingdom of God*" occurs only ten times and is replaced by such equivalents as "*new Creation*", "*life in the Spirit*", "*age to come*", "*glory of God*", "*God's inheritance*", "*life eternal*". "*Life eternal*" is a favourite rendering in the Fourth Gospel (seventeen times, plus six in the Johannine epistles) of *God's Kingdom*, used only twice. Although the phrase "*Kingdom of God*" was actually one of the catchwords of Jesus' preaching, there has been during the Second Testament times inculturation by the early Church—new way for its translation so as to adapt to the different cultural milieux, where the Gospel penetrated. In the Second Testament period, Jews and the emerging Christian communities lived under Roman rule. Moreover, Second Testament writings attest to *Satan's present rule on earth*. In the temptation scene, the devil declares that he has authority over "*all the kingdoms of the world*" (Lk 4:5-6). Satan's minions, the demons, still afflict humankind. Paul understood that the world was subjugated to Satan or evil powers (1 Cor 2:8; 15:24-27; 2 Cor 4:4), while the Fourth Gospel considers Satan "*the ruler of this world*" (Jn 12:31; 14:30). The most explicit expression of this understanding is in 1 Jn 5:19: "*The whole world is in the power of the evil one*".

It is noteworthy that the term "*Kingdom of God*" is almost totally absent from the Gospel of John, occurring only in Jn 3:3.5, apparently, the author reinterpreted the concept in terms of his own interest in "*eternal life*".

The author of Revelation looked for the establishment of God's Kingdom both in heaven and on earth (11:15; 12:10), albeit a new heaven, and a new earth (21:1). In the end, new Jerusalem would come down from heaven (Rv 21:2.10), and God and the Lamb would "*reign for ever and ever*" (22:5). This would take place soon, "*for the time is near*" (22:6-7.10.12). The author identified the evil ruler of the present age as Rome (chs.13; 17-18), linked perhaps, with Satan, who was to continue his reign of terror on earth a while longer (chs.12; 20).

The Matthaean version "*the Kingdom of heaven*" does not refer to an '*other-worldly*' reality, beyond the earth and beyond death—a purely eschatological conception of the Kingdom. In the Matthaean phrase, "*heaven*" is a circumlocution for God (a periphrastic term for God—Jews would replace the term Yahweh by such substitutes as the *Name*, the *Power*, the *Glory*, the *Heaven*...).

We should understand the term “*kingdom of God or heaven*” against the historical background of the People of God: Israel has gone through *several crises*, like foreign invasions; collapse of the monarchy, destruction of the Temple, Exile to Babylonia, Persian domination, encounter with Greek culture, Roman conquest, ambiguous reign of Herod, finally the ruthless rule of the Roman Procurators. Prophetic promises of ideal rule were not fulfilled, and consequently pessimism arose: the world was under cosmic, satanic forces (dualistic apocalyptic eschatology). But there was hope that God would overcome the powers of evil, that the Creator will not allow the power of evil to triumph, that the *go’el* (‘*avenger*’) of his people will not leave them in slavery. Therefore, God’s rule is the *new order* to be established through the *eschatological upheaval*, through *God’s revolution* (Cf. Lucien LEGRAND, “God’s Kingdom and Liberation”, pp.311-325, *The Living Word*, vol.79, no.5, September-October 1973).

4.2: *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*

The Kingdom of God was an essential part of Jesus’ preaching. The summary and epitome of Jesus’ proclamation was as follows: “*The time has come: the Kingdom of God is upon you; repent and believe the Gospel*” (Mk 1:15; cf. Mt 4:17). Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God, heals, exorcises and thus brings to fulfillment Gods’ liberating interventions in human history. The Church proclaims that in and through Jesus God’s “*revolution of love*” is setting humankind free from the evil powers that enslaved it. Exorcisms in Jesus’ ministry are basically liberating activity of God. With the coming of Christ, the powers of evil have been overcome, the world reconciled with itself and with God. As Jesus himself has explained his exorcisms: “*If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out devils, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you*” (Mt 12:26-28). God’s revolution has started in and through Jesus. Luke has “*finger of God*” (Lk 11:20), instead of “*Spirit of God*” (Lukan version of the saying is more primitive than the Matthaean and the “*finger of God*” is an allusion to Ex 8:19)—in Ex 8:19, the “*finger of God*” is God’s saving intervention to free his people from the bondage of Egypt. By attributing his exorcisms to the “*finger of God*”, Jesus gives us to understand that they are the continuation of the Exodus—the same divine might that crushed the power of Egypt to liberate Israel is at work in Jesus for the final fight against the ultimate forms of alienation of humankind.

"*The Kingdom of God is at hand* (ἤ(4i,<, eggiken)" of Mk 1:15 means that the Kingdom has come or is upon you. With coming of Jesus the *eschaton* has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience. We can ask whether the "Kingdom" or "Revolution" or "Liberation", announced in the Gospel, is historical or eschatological. Does the liberation announced by the Gospel belong to this world or is it otherworldly? The answer is that it is present and it continues to the future. It brings about liberation in his struggle against the historical forms of alienation. And it will never be completed within the confines of human's historical achievements. It calls for *transformation of human relationships* on earth. Jesus himself lived and died in service of the Kingdom.

4.3: *Kingdom of God and its Implications for contemporary Christian life*

The Kingdom of God is necessarily linked with hope. It can never be fully realized in history. It emphasizes the *incarnation of Christianity in real history*, in the "joys and hopes, the sorrows and sufferings of humanity" (Vatican II, GS 1). The Kingdom of God is open to the oppressed and marginalized people of our time. One of the characteristics would be "*preferential love*" for the poor. Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom through Beatitudes, parables, healings and exorcisms. Our *preferential option for the poor* is deeply rooted in the poverty, cross and compassionate heart of Jesus. Christian community should be joyful bearer of the news that God loves the world. It should be involved in the work *for a better world*. It involves reversal of values: the rich are sent away empty (cf. Lk 1:52f). It encompasses the whole cosmos—the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay, in the freedom of the children of God (cf. Rm 8:21). *Spirituality of the Kingdom* means *to be Christlike*, by building it in the midst of actual realities of history. In the real world social commitment may often entail persecution, even martyrdom (Cf. Jon SOBRINO, "The Kingdom of God in contemporary spirituality", *Theology Digest*, 33:3 (Fall, 1986), pp.325-327).

Conclusion

From this short survey we can glean how the concept of Kingdom of God was gradually purified and spiritualized. The Kingdom of God became the love, justice, the ideal revealed in the Gospel, in the Person of Jesus...

God the Liberator

Shilanand Hemraj

The liberative dimension of the image of God belongs to the very basic God-experience of the people of Israel and of the early disciples. The author tries to trace the development of the image of God as liberator through the biblical traditions from patriarchal history to the Gospels.

“Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found?
Our Master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation;
He is bound with us all, forever.
Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense.
What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained?
Meet him and stand by him in toil and sweat of thy brow”.

(Rabindranath Tagore)

In the faith expression of the ancient Israelites and the early disciples of Jesus there is only one, invisible, “face-less” God, the eternal and almighty Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, merciful Liberator and Giver of life. It can be assumed that a credal statement about the uniqueness of God (e.g. Neh 9:6), comes at a later stage. Only when different aspects of the Divine (or different divinities) have been experienced, can they be re-collected into one common belief in the oneness of God. The experience of a divine Saviour, who came down to Liberate his devotees from oppressive forces, must have preceded the explicit profession of monotheistic faith. But within the different manifestations, accepted to originate from one and the same Divinity, the experience of Liberation and its attribution to one and the same supreme source of salvation must have remained first and foremost.

In Exodus ch.3 the separate expressions “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (vv.6.15) are linked into the one God of our ancestors, namely the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (v.16: Acts 7:32), who has come down to Deliver his people... indeed, a living God (Acts 14:15) and God of the living (Mk 12:27), about whom Joseph is told to have assured his brothers that everything happened “to save your lives by a great Deliverance” (Gen 45:7, in KJV translation).

Thus among the multiple “faces” of God in the Bible, the face of a liberating God should be of primary importance and most frequently recurring.

1. “Peni-el”, the Face of God

Although Biblical believers do hold that divine love and truthfulness have been manifested, they do not claim that God has ever been “seen” literally. Rather, revelation itself shows that God is essentially “unseen”; no human face can be ascribed to God. His glorious mystery can only be evoked through symbolic language. Thus, Biblical passages about God’s mighty appearances for Liberation are understood as merely visionary enunciations: Moses, while hiding his face, witnessed God’s presence in the figure of “a flame of fire out of a bush”, which is ablaze but not consumed (Ex 32); and within such brightness of fire Ezekiel beheld “something that seemed like a human form”, seated above the likeness of a throne, with the appearance of splendour all around like a rainbow (Ez 1:26); and on such throne of fiery flames Daniel is imagined to have seen “an Ancient One” with hair like pure wool and a robe white as snow (Dan 7:9), who bestows kingship to his “saints”, the liberated people, represented by a figure, like a son of man. But, no human eye has ever seen or can see God, who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16; Jo 1:18). Even Jesus does not “see” the heavenly Father, in the plain sense of the word. When John’s Gospel applies the word to Jesus, who coming from God has “seen” the Father (Jo 6:46), it is an expression of intimate relationship shared by a true believer; only when seeing the Guru with the eyes of faith he-or-she is said equally to be seeing the Father (Jo 14:9)

Therefore, the term “Face of God, the Liberator”, can only be taken in the literary sense. Although we read that the Lord used to speak face-to-face with Moses, this literary Moses is allowed only to hear the

utterance of God's gracious Name, when divine goodness passes by. As it were just for a moment, from within the cover of a cleft in the rock, he is enabled to see the backside of God, who has already passed by (Ex 33:19-23). Also the literary Elijah, looking from a cave of the mountain, could witness only the shattering effects of a great wind and then the trembling of an earthquake and afterward the brightness of fire; but finally, after all those mighty premonitions, he could hear only "a sound of sheer silence" (1 Kgs 19:12). Yet, the same Lord is believed to have spoken to the people, while dwelling in the midst of the people (Nb 14:14). The very presence of the invisible God is most forcefully expressed by the concept of God's "pânîm" that is, his Face - but often simply translated as his presence. Moses is being assured by the Lord: "My presence (literally, my Face) will go with you" (Ex 33:14).

At all places one meets the same God. When Jacob fled to Haran on the way, at night, he had a dream: he saw the divinity standing above an ascending ladder. Therefore, Jacob called the place *Beth-el*, that is "the house of God" (Gen 28:19). When returning from Haran, he wrestled with a man during the night until he received a blessing. Therefore Jacob called the place *peniel*, that is "the Face of God", saying: "I have seen God face-to-face, yet my life is preserved" (32:30). Afterwards Jacob, now called Israel, reached *Shechem*, where he erected an altar to God, the E1 of Israel (33:20). – Interestingly, the infidelity of Israel is presented in the reverse order of place names. It was first at *Shechem* and then at *Peniel* that Jeroboam, the break-away king of Israel, decided to make the golden calves (1 Kgs 12:25-28). But while sacrificing to the calf at *Bethel*, he was struck at the altar, so that he cried to the man of God: "Entreat now the favour (lit. Face) of the Lord your God, and pray for me!" (13:6)

Different manifestations and interventions of God were re-placed by the concept of God's uniqueness. Initially it may not have been clear to all worshipers that God (Elohim) should not be localised as a particular deity (E1). Hence, it was thought better to have only one place of worship (Deut 12:14). It was at "the house of God" in Jerusalem, that the Israelites were expected to seek God's true Face of grace. After the dedication of the temple, Solomon was given the assurance: "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my Face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin" (2 Chron 7:14). It was for this very purpose that God brought

the people out of Egypt “with his own presence (lit. Face), by his great power” (Deut 4:37) to give them the land and to choose a place for them to worship, that they may “eat there in the presence (lit. before the Face) of the Lord” and rejoice (12:7). Shared food is a sign of blessing and of God’s sustenance. It was told in a symbolic manner: “You shall set the bread of the presence (lit. Face) before me (lit. my Face) always” (Ex 25:30). Being present to his people means that God is concerned about their needs, as they cry and pour out their heart “before the presence (lit. Face) of the Lord”.

Yet, it was still possible that the glory of the God of Israel might leave that privileged dwelling place of worship. Indeed, when it became a place of abomination, God turned away his Face, and went to dwell among the people in exile (Ez 10:19). For “when human rights are perverted in the presence (lit. Face) of the Most High, when one’s case is subverted, does the Lord not see it? (Lam 3:35-36). After the return from exile, in spite of the restored temple, the “holy place” for God’s indwelling could rather be conceived as the redeemed ones themselves, a people, humble and lowly. The most appealing “Face” of God for the remnant people was that of a Redeemer. “He became their Saviour in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence (lit. Face) that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them” (Is 63:8-9).

2. “El goel”, the redeeming God

The Hebrew verb that specifically refers to the redeeming and liberating act of God is “ga>al”. It is used in Exodus for the basic experience of Israel’s liberation from slavery, according to God’s promise: “I am the Lord and I will free you from the burden of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them: I will Redeem you with an outstretched arm” (Ex 6:6; see also 15:13). But the term occurs more frequently to characterise God’s redeeming and liberating act for the people in exile, who are experiencing a new exodus. In the second part of the prophetic book of Isaiah (chs 40-63) one can count 22 verbal forms of “ga>al”, most prominent being the active participle form “go>el” (redeeming mostly translated redeemer). For instance Is 43:14 reads: “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: for your sake I will send to Babylon and break down all the bars”.

But something deeper is implied than merely an external change of condition. The verb ga>al is used for someone who is personally

concerned about a situation and makes a dutiful and painful effort to extricate an individual or a group from an oppressive context of distress. The obvious application is one's involvement to rescue a close relative, who has been reduced to poverty and was forced to sell his property in dire need: "Then the next-of-kin shall come and Redeem what the relative has sold" (Lev 25:25). In an extreme situation of violence, the kinsman-redeemer may have to assume the role of a vindicator, an avenger of blood (Nb 35:12). This responsibility of coming to the rescue of the needy relative extends also to non-relatives, to any victim of injustice. A righteous king is expected to defend the rights of the poor: "from oppression and violence he Redeems their lives" (Ps 72:14). Because of such redeemer, the poor feel protected: "Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of the orphans, for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you" (Prov 23:10f). Therefore, in his annihilation, at the brim of despair and in his desperate rebellion, Job holds on to the conviction that somewhere there above stands a mediator, a witness who "would maintain the right of a mortal with God" (Job 16:21) and, like a Redeemer, "at last he will stand upon the earth" (19:25). At last, when facing the mystery of God's presence, out of the whirlwind, Job surrenders: "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you" (42:5).

God always acted in a redemptive manner towards his people - like no other God would ever have done for his own (1 Chron 17:21). The chosen people do not deserve any such preferential treatment: it is only because God loves them that time and again he redeems them (Is 43:1-4; Deut 7:8). Redemption implies forgiveness of wrong-doing (Dan 9:15), so that truthful relationship may be restored. For "the Lord will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression" (Is 59:20 - a passage quoted in Rom 11:26 with universal implication). Liberation is offered freely, unconditionally; but it can only be enacted if one accepts to be liberated, and thereby liberates oneself, becomes a liberator of oneself.

In the Greek translation of the 46 occurrences of the Hebrew "Goel", Redeemer, there is no uniformity: mostly a verbal form in the present/ aorist participle is being used:

1. "angchisteuôn" is a (redeeming) relative, who is acting with the responsibility of a kinsman or avenger, e.g. in LXX-Lev 25:25

(sometimes a derivative noun-formation “angchistêus/angchisteutes” is being used, e.g. in LXX-Ruth 3:9)

2. “rhuomenos/ rhusamenos” is a delivering one, as in LXX-Gen 48:16 and almost in all references of the second part of Isaiah, e.g. in Is 59:20 quoted in Rom 11:26.
3. “lutroumenos” is a redeeming one, who releases by payment of a ransom, e.g. in LXX-Ps 103:4 (the noun “lutrôtês” occurs in Ps 19:14 and 78:35 – a title which is applied to Moses in Acts 7:35!).
4. “exairoumenos” is a rescuing one in LXX-Is 60:16 – a verb applied to the liberative act of God through his angel (Acts 12:11) or through Jesus “who gave himself for our sins to set us free!” (Gal 1:4)
5. “ek-luein... mellôn” is one who is going to unloose, a releaser, in Job 19:20. The verb “luô”, to untie, to set free, is used in a very liberative way in LXX-Ps 146:7: “The Lord executes justice for the oppressed gives food to the hungry, sets the prisoners free”.
6. The special occurrence of “Goel” in the beautiful prayer of Is 63:16b – “You, O Lord, are our Father; ‘Our Redeemer’ from of old is your name”—has been rendered by a Greek imperative: “But you, Lord, our Father, Deliver US (“rhusai hêmas”), because from the beginning your name (namely, “father”) is upon us”. This is exactly the Greek form of the prayer taught by Jesus to his disciples: “(Our Father), deliver us (rhusai hêmas) from evil/ from the evil one” (Mt 6:13).

Hence, this short analysis of the Greek terminology is quite relevant in view of the New Testament usage, which we shall consider at the end of our study.

3. The “Face of Salvation” in the Psalms

In one psalm of petition the psalmist sings: “Hope in God: for I shall again praise him for his help (lit. for the (acts of) salvation of his Face – y^cshuchot panâw)” (Ps 42:5). Constantly, God’s gracious presence, the salvation of his Face, is turned towards us. However, there is no need to correct this verse, as many translators do, in view of a slightly different expression in v.11: “I shall again praise him, my help (lit, the salvation of my face, which may in fact also mean the salvation of God’s Face to me) and my God”. Thus, we have been provided here

almost an exact verbal expression of a most encouraging Biblical theme: "the Face of God the Liberator".

The liberating presence of God is especially mentioned in the psalms of trust or trustful invocation. The clearest example is Ps 31: "I trust in you, O Lord.... My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies... Let your Face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love... How abundant is your goodness that you have laid up for those who fear you... In the shelter of your presence (lit. Face) you hide them from human plots". In Ps 80 the community repeats thrice this prayer for restoration: "Restore us, O God: let your face shine, that we may be saved!". We find here an echo of the solemn priestly blessing (Nb 6:25); but the words of benediction are extended far beyond the community in Ps 67: "May God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations!" (For similar expressions of liberation, combined with God's "pânîm", see Ps 27:9; 69:17f, 119:134f.170).

In all those songs of pilgrimage and community worship, collected in the book of 150 Psalms, we count no less than 255 explicit references, in which the following restricted vocabulary of liberation is used, expressed through multiple forms of mainly four Hebrew roots:

- (A) N_{SL} (deliver)
- (B) YŠ < (Save)
- (C) PLT or HLS (rescue) and
- (D) PDH or G>L (redeem):

We can list the references according to four subsequent stages: a cry for liberation, an address to the Liberator, a liberative action, and a new condition of being liberated.

***1. First there is a situation of distress,
from which arises an intense call for liberation***

Let us look at three examples:

"In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame.
In your righteousness Deliver me.

Incline your ear to me; Rescue me speedily" (beginning of Ps 31).

"Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might.

Hear my prayer, O God" (beginning of Ps 54).

"Never let iniquity have dominion over me.

Redeem me from human oppression, that I may keep your precepts"
(Ps 119:133f)

Now, for such cries for liberation there are 64 references (with verbs in imperative singular):

- (A) The outcry "Deliver!" occurs 22 times for the root NŠL (mostly translated "deliver" by NRSV, but 3 times "rescue" and twice "save")
- (B) The outcry "Save!" occurs 25 times for YŠ< (mostly translated "save" by NRSV, but 3 times also "give victory", twice "deliver" and once "help"). We add here one occurrence of the root MLT, also translated "save" in Ps 116:4.
- (C) The outcry "Rescue!" occurs 5 times for PLT (although NRSV translates thrice "deliver") and 3 times for HLS (although NRSV translates once "deliver" and once "save"). We add one occurrence of the root PSH translated "deliver" in Ps 144:11.
- (D) The outcry "Redeem" occurs 5 times for PDH (although NRSV translates once "set me free") and 2 times for G>L.

2. The outcry is addressed to God, whose liberating power is being acknowledged

Let us again consider three examples:

"I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God...

O Saviour of those who seek refuge" (Ps 17:6f)

"I am poor and needy: hasten to me, O God!

You are my help and my Deliverer: O Lord, do not delay" (Ps 70:5)

"They repented and sought God earnestly. They remembered that
God was their rock, the Most High God their Redeemer" (Ps 78:34f).

As titles of the Liberator there are 17 references (mostly in the form of present participles):

- (A) In addressing God as "Deliverer" Maššîl is used 4 times (although NRSV translates this participle form of NŠL thrice as "one who delivers" and once as "one who rescues")
- (B) In addressing God as "Saviour" Mošîa< is used 4 times (which

NRSV translates indeed as "Saviour" in 17:7 and 106:21, elsewhere as "one who saves")

- (C) In addressing God as "Rescuer" M^ephallet is used 5 times (which NRSV translates four times as "Deliverer" and once as "one who delivers")
- (D) In addressing God as "Redeemer" P^odeh is used once, namely in Ps 34:22 (translated by NRSV as "one who redeems") and Go^cel 3 times (translated by NRSV as "Redeemer" in 19:14 and 78:35, but once as "one who redeems" in 103:4).

3. In answer to the prayer, God's liberating act is experienced and gratefully described

Three brief examples may be quoted:

"I sought the Lord, and he answered me,
and Delivered me from all my fears" (Ps. 34:4)

"O Holy One of Israel! My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises
to you;

my soul also, which you have Rescued" (Ps 71:22f)

"The earth feared and was still when God rose up to establish
judgment; to Save all the oppressed of the earth" (Ps 76:8f)

In descriptions of God's liberative action there are 85 references (mostly verbs in past tense):

- (A) The root NSL occurs 16 times to tell that God "Delivered" (although NRSV translates thrice with the synonym "rescued"). In Ps 72:14 and 82:4 the same attitude is required from rulers and judges in favour of the needy. We should add the forceful expression "Set Free" in 3 places: once each for the root <BR (lit, "made to cross") in Ps 81:6 for PTH (lit. "opened") in Ps 105:20, and for NTR (lit. "loosened") in Ps 146:7.
- (B) For "Saved" no less than 33 times YŠ< is used, especially towards the humble people (e.g. Ps. 18:27; 145:19) (NRSV usually translates "saved", but 12 times "delivered", thrice "gave victory", once "made safe" and once "helped"). One can add 4 references with the root MLT, for "saved" (or twice "delivered" in NRSV).
- (C) For "Rescued" the root PLT is used 6 times (NRSV, however, translates 3 times "delivered") and HLS slightly more frequently,

8 times (again NRSV renders half of those references by “delivered”). We add here 2 references with the meaning “rescued” for which the root PRQ is used in Ps 136:24 and PSH in Ps 144:10.

- (D) The action “Redeemed” occurs 8 times for the root PDH (although translated in NRSV twice “gave ransom”, once, “delivered” and once “rescued”) and 5 times for G>L, e.g. twice in one verse of Ps.107:2.

4. *God's intervention results in a condition of liberation, which is testified in confidence*

We must restrict ourselves to three examples:

“By awesome deeds you answer us with Deliverance, O God of our Salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas” (Ps 65:5)

“Sing to the Lord, bless his name:

tell of his Salvation from day to day” (Ps 96:2)

“He sent Redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.

Holy and awesome is his name” (Ps 111:9)

In mentioning such resulting conditions of liberation there are 89 references (mostly nouns):

- (A) For “Deliverance” there is no noun-formation for the root N_{SL}, but we can replace it 7 times by a noun from the root S_{DQ} with the same meaning, e.g. in Ps 40:9 “the glad news of Deliverance” (although NRSV translates thrice “salvation”)
- (B) Four noun-formations from the root Y_Š< are used most frequently, 76 times!, for the state of “Salvation” (although NRSV translates them 9 times “help”, 8 times “victory”, once “triumph”, “saving refuge” or “safety”). Among those nouns the term Y^cŠua< (→ Jesus!) occurs 43 times, the first one being Ps 3:8: “Salvation (in NRSV deliverance) belongs to the Lord”.
- (C) The noun “Rescue” occurs 2 times from the root PL_I as in Ps 56:7 (in NRSV footnote: whereas the other occurrence in Ps 32:7 is rendered by “deliverance”). No noun occurs as derivation from H_{LS}.
- (D) For “redemption” there are 3 references with derivations from the root PDH, as in Ps 130:7, “with the Lord there is mercy, and with

him is plenteous Redemption" (= KJV, whereas NRSV translates here "great power to redeem" and "ransom" in 49:8). There is no abstract noun-formation from G>L, but we can add once the term "Liberty" itself, as a translation of R^eHaBha (lit. broad place) in Ps 119:45: "I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought your precepts" (what a contrast: obtaining freedom by observing the precepts of the Law; but compare with the expression "the law of liberty", in the Epistle of James 1:25!)

4. The path of liberation in the Gospels

The loving Face of God as Deliverer, Saviour, Rescuer or Redeemer is ever turned towards humankind, during its age long journey towards Liberation from outer as well as inner bonds. But God's Face is his very presence among us, a liberating presence. God wants his Face to be mirrored in us, who are being moulded into his image. However, we all fail to reflect the image, except for the One who became the perfect "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). For, "times of refreshing" were expected to come "from the presence (in Greek "prosôpon", that is Face) of the Lord" when he sends the Messiah (Acts 3:20). Thus, from the Face came the human face, which reflected in perfect response back to the Face. For, the obedient Messiah "entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence (lit. Face) of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:23). Therefore, true Liberation is the realisation in faith that in the Guru Messiah "Face-to-face" and "face-to-Face" is fully enacted, so much so that the mirrored face and the mirroring face are one! The believing disciple sees "the light of the gospel of the glory of the Messiah, who is the image of God", because in the disciple's heart is reflected "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus, the Messiah" (2 Cor 4:46). This is the marvelous insight of Saint Paul, who writes in this context: "All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (3:18) and "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Freedom" (3:17).

And elsewhere Saint Paul reminds the new disciples: "You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another... Live by the Spirit!" (Gal 5:13ff). The whole law is

fulfilled when we enact the single commandment: "Love your neighbour as yourself", after the example of the Guru: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (Jol 13:34). When trying to be doers of the word and not merely hearers, we should not only look at our own "face" in the mirror, but at "the perfect law, the law of liberty", as seen in the Face of the Guru, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act (Jam 1:24f).

The path of liberation, therefore, is liberation "with a human face", which is not possible without the Guru. That is why, Jesus shared our human nature: to free us, "he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect" (Heb 2:17), "tested as we are, yet without sin" (4:15): "It was fitting that God (our Father)... in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their Salvation perfect through suffering" (2:10). Such liberation is not imposed on us from outside: it is self-liberation, liberation of the true self, from within, through the liberated Guru, "whom God raised, having freed him from death" (Acts 2:24) and who after his death breathed the Spirit, the gift of peace, the forgiveness of sin (Jo 20:22f).

It could be helpful to analyse the vocabulary of Liberation in the Gospels, as we have done for the Psalms, restricting ourselves to a few key-words in Greek with the meaning "deliver, save, rescue and redeem". But the result is most surprising: we count only 80 relevant passages, including 18 parallels! Therefore "the gospel of salvation" (Eph 1:13), the good news of liberation par excellence, contains rather a sparse formulation of its liberating message - perhaps, to focus on the implication and implementation of a few explicit passages. Let us consider the terminology of liberation in the Gospels, according to four subsequent stages: calling for liberation, addressing the Liberator, experiencing liberative action, obtaining liberation.

1. The outcry for liberation in the Gospels:

(only 4 relevant references)

- (A) The last petition of the Lord's prayer "Deliver us from evil/ the evil one" (Mt 6:13) is the only call with the imperative form "rhusai". Read in the situation of Israel at that time, the language by itself is that of an outcry by impoverished, oppressed people.
- (B) But taught to the disciples, it reflects the prayer of the Guru himself, who struggling to be faithful to his mission, to reveal God's glory

through the exaltation on the cross, prefers not to be granted what he asks: "Father, Save me from this hour" (Jo 12:27). By this cry the Messiah is being tempted mockingly on the cross, "Save yourself and come down from the cross" (Mk 14:30; parallel Mt 27:40). The same outcry "sôson" from the verb "sôzô", to save, is addressed to the Guru by the disciples, when they are in the boat tossed by the storm: "Lord Save us!" (Mt 8:25). This outcry "of little faith" is repeated by the wavering disciple, Peter the Rock, when he is sinking in the water: "Lord, Save me!" (14:30); but he is upheld by the hand of the Guru. Note that the welcoming acclamation "Hosanna", addressed to Jesus, "son of David", at the entrance of Jerusalem (6 times in the Gospels) is originally addressed to the Lord by crowds of pilgrims, shouting "hošî<â-nnâ in Ps 118:25: "Save us, please". The humble Messianic king, riding on a donkey, according to LXX-Zech 9:9 is really a saviour (sôzôn, lit. saving).

- (C) The demand of the crowds in front of the Roman governor Pilate: "Release rather Barabbas for us" (Lk 23:18) is uttered in sheer ignorance of salvation. The verb "apoluô", to unbind, to set free, is here used for the liberation of an imprisoned terrorist.
- (D) There is no call for redemption as such.

2. *Titles of the Liberator:*

(only 3 relevant references in the Gospels)

- (A) There is no reference to a "Deliverer" in the Gospels, although such a title is used in Rom 11:26: "Out of Zion will come the Deliverer", quoting Is 59:20 (where "go>el", Redeemer is used for the Lord). It explains God's saving purpose for all Israel.
- (B) The function of a Saviour (sôtêr) refers to the Lord God in the Song of Mary (Lk 1:47); but it is attributed to Jesus in the Good News of his birth: "To you today a Saviour is born, who is Messiah Lord" (Lk 2:11). The most explicit reference occurs, after the suggestion of the woman at the well that Jesus may well be the Messiah; the people of Samaria utter their belief about Jesus' identity in plain words: "We know that this is truly the Saviour of the world" (Jo 4:42). Note that the very name of Jesus, in its shortest familiar form "Yešû" derives from "Y^e-hô-šûa < (May the

Lord save), as hinted at in Mt 1:21: "You are to name him Jesus, for he will Save his people from their sins".

- (C) There is no title or address for "Rescuer", but the name of the eloquent Alexandrian Jew Apollo (Acts 18:24) is originally a popular Greek God, who, with a play on words, was called "Apo-luôn", One who releases, and not Apolluôn", Destroyer (Rev 10:11).
- (D) The Gospels contain no term for "redeemer", although the appropriate title would be "Lutrôtês", which Acts 7:35 uses for the mission of Moses "as both ruler and Liberator" (prefiguring the mission of Jesus).

3. *Liberating action of God through Jesus:*

(51 relevant references, including 16 parallels)

- (A) The verb "rhuomai" is used for the general experience of being delivered from the hands of one's enemies in Lk 1:74 (which is the Lord's doing, as said explicitly in the title of Ps 18). It is a challenge thrown at the crucified Messiah: "Let God deliver him now, if he wants so" (Mt 27:43).
- (B) The verb "sôzô" (or twice the compound "dia-sôzô") is used at least 12 times (with 5 synoptic parallels) in contexts where Jesus performs a wonderful act by "Saving" from infirmity, in the sense of "healing" or "making well", although he himself attributes the miraculous cure to the beneficiary's faith in God. Even such physical experience is a sign of a deeper spiritual transformation. The double layer appears, for instance, in the saying of Mk 8:35 (par. Mt 16:25; Lk 9:24): "Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will Save it". Such salvation is only possible because of God (Mk 10:26: Par. Mt.19:25; Lk 18:26) through faith (Lk 8:12; Mk 16:16); but enduring perseverance is required (Mk 13:13.20); par. Mt 10:22; 24:13.22; see Lk 13:23f). Still due to our weakness, we will always be Saved through forgiveness of sin (Lk 7:50) and this salvific pardoning is the very reason of Jesus' coming into the world (Mt 1:21; Lk 19:10; Jo 3:17; 5:34; 12:47). Therefore, we are Saved "through him" as if entering through the gate (Jo 10:9). The remaining references are biting remarks about the helpless crucified Messiah: "He saved others; he cannot save himself" (Mk 15:31; par. Mt.27:42. 49; Lk 23:35. 37.39).

- (C) The use of the verb “apo-luô” (Release) has a fine example in Lk 13:12, where Jesus heals a crippled woman, saying, “You are set free from your ailment”; it is also used in a deeper sense of forgiveness (twice in Lk 6:37), like also its synonym, the verb “aph-iêmi” (lit. to send away), used in Jo 20:23. Both verbs occur together in the parable of the unforgiving servant, whom his master “released and forgave the debt” (Mt.18:27). Both verbs have a background of social liberation: the first in LXX-1 Mac 10:43 (“Let them be released and receive back all their property”); the second in LXX-Judith 16:23 (“She set her maid free”). Peculiar in the Gospels is the use of “apo-luô” for dismissal of a wife/ husband (Mt 1:19; 5:31f; par Mk 10:12). In the context of the trial of Jesus it occurs time and again, either to release or not to release (Lk 23:16.20.22.25; and 13 parallels in Mt 27; Mk 15 and Jo 18-19).
- (D) The verb “lutroô”, occurring once in the Gospels is aptly used by Luke for the bewilderment of the disciples of Emmaus: “We had hoped that he was the one to Redeem Israel” (Lk 24:21). But, in view of the Greek custom of emancipating a slave through manumission - by which in a fictive way the slave is purchased by God through a redemptive deposit in the temple treasury (hence, he or she belongs now to God and cannot be enslaved again) – the positive aspect of freedom prevails. We can add, therefore, two prominent references, where the verb “eleutheroô” is used: “You will know the Truth, and the Truth will Make you Free” (Jo 8:32), and “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (v.36).

4. *The purpose of gratuitous liberation:*

(22 relevant references including 2 parallels)

- (A) There is no noun in the Gospels for “deliverance”, corresponding to “rhuomai”
- (B) There are 7 references in which either “sôtêria” or “sôtêrion” are used for salvation. The first five references are fully in continuation with the salvific terminology of the Psalms: God is praised for having raised up a “hom of salvation for us” (Lk 1:69), “a mighty saviour” in NRSV – see Ps 18:2) and for granting us “salvation from our enemies” (v.71- see Ps 106:10); the salvific purpose is “to give knowledge of salvation to his people” (v.77 - see Ps 67:2);

the salvific event has already started “for my eyes have seen your salvation” (2:30- see Ps 98:3); a similar expression occurs in a quotation from Is 40:5 in Lk 3:6: “All flesh shall see the salvation of God”. All the previous references are found in Luke’s gospel, duly called “the Gospel of Salvation”; but the real novelty is the utterance of Jesus in the home of the chief tax-collector Zacchaeus: “Today Salvation has come to this house” (Lk 19:9). How could this sinner, so much intent on seeing the Guru, resist the look from his loving face? Still, the unmerited salvation bestowed on all humankind is linked with the reality of salvation experienced in historic Israel: “For Salvation is from the Jews” (Jo 4:22).

- (C) The noun “aphesis” has the meaning of dismissal and release from bondage, as in the instance of the release of the exiled captives, with permission to return and rebuild the nation (LXX-1 Esdras 4:62). The term is used twice in the manifesto of liberation: “to proclaim release to the captives... and to let the oppressed go free” (Lk 4:18). Otherwise, a spiritual liberation is meant, namely forgiveness of sins (though implying redress of injustice done), as in Mk 1:4 (par. Lk 3:3); Lk 1:77 or universal forgiveness as in Mt 26:28 (through the covenant blood of the Guru’s death) and Lk 24:47 (in its proclamation to all nations).
- (D) Finally, we have three nouns derived from “lutroô” (redeem): 1) “lutron” is used almost as a technical term to present the redemptive self-surrender of the Servant Jesus in terms of a Ransom (Mk 10:45; par. Mt 20:28); 2) “lutrôsis” in the language of Ps 111:9 summarises the coming events as Redemption for the people and the city of Jerusalem (Lk 1:68; 2:38). 3) “apo-lutrosis” qualifies this Redemption as a total Liberation at the final coming of the Son of Man in glory (Lk 21:28). We can add here the use of the adjective “eleutheros” for the state of Freedom enjoyed by “the children” who are already endowed with heavenly citizenship (Mt 17:26). The fullness of Truth and Love, revealed in the Face of the Guru has made them to be free (Jo 8:33.36).

This survey of the language of liberation must refer to at least one more important complementary aspect, found outside the vocabulary of the Gospels. “Liberation from” such and such negative reality happens for the sake of acquisition into new fellowship and communion, through

the Guru. Two passages may be quoted: "He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a People Of His Own, who are zealous for good deeds" (Tit 2:14); when responding to the gospel of liberation in faith, we are marked by the Holy Spirit "who is the pledge of our inheritance toward Redemption as God's Own People, to the praise of his Glory!" (Eph 1:14).

70/1 Roberts Rd;

Frazer Town

Bangalore 560005

God the Judge and His Justice

Jacob Prasad

The study presents the various perspectives in which such a complex biblical theme as God the Judge is approached in the biblical tradition, starting with an investigation into the vocabulary. this contribution goes through all major related texts and all the crucial aspects of the theme.

1. Introduction

The concept of God as judge generally evokes in everyone feelings of anguish and worry, if not consternation. While one Psalmist expressed this feeling passionately, "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand" (Ps 130,3), another one prayed, "Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you" (Ps 143,2; see also Qoh 7,20; Job 4,17). Indeed in the Bible, both in the First and Second Testaments, we are facing the reality of divine self-communication. This revelation happens in multiform and variant ways. This plurality and difference can be depicted in "the contrast between God and Moses speaking face to face as a man speaks with his friend (Ex. 33. 11) and from the same God who cannot be revealed except from the back (Ex. 33.21-3) for no one can see God and live (Ex. 19.21; 33,20; Num. 4.20)."¹ This points to the difficulty of comprehending the reality of godhead, since our experience and perception of God remains always partial even when the experience is awfully powerful and the perception conspicuously clear. For it is obvious from the Bible that despite all his immanence God's

1 J. Pixley, "God, a Bone of Contention in the Hebrew Bible," *Concilium* (2002/1) 9-16, here 10.

transcendence cannot for an instant be removed.² The same risk and problem is involved in the Bible's presentation of God as judge and the nature of his judgment. Indeed the idea of God as judge and the presentation of the nature of his judgment has undergone a development and an evolution in the Biblical thought. Trudging through the different steps of it as seen in the Old Testament, in which the apocalyptic understanding took a decisive turn in putting forward a universal outlook, we shall try to arrive at the Christologisation of it in the New Testament. The idea of God as judge and the quality of his judgment realised itself in the Christ-event, in which the judgment of God revealed itself as a judgment of forgiveness.

2. The God of Jacob

In the *Torah*, as represented in the patriarchal stories, God as judge is supposed to be perceived from his just actions, positing a causal connection between human behaviour and God's appreciation and judgment. Abraham is told, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (Gen 12,1-2). The promise is linked to a quid pro quo. The fulfilment of the promise is based on Abraham's acting according to what God wants. Therefore a general quid pro quo system of reward and punishment seems to function. Yet as we know from the story, Abraham does not achieve everything as in the promise, although he has done everything according to what he was commanded. At his deathbed he does not possess a great land, or a great progeny; apparently there is no balance between the promise and its fulfillment.

In the story of Jacob, it had been told that the elder would serve the younger (Gen 25,23); but in the end it is the younger who prostrates before the elder and offers him his servitude and possessions (Gen 33), although the latter would not accept it. Finally Jacob does not possess the land too, for he dies in Egypt. It means that there is no fulfilment of the divine oracles and promises. There is also no retribution: Jacob lies and deceives, thinks only of himself and acts egotistically, but at the end

2 Cf. H. Küng, "Rediscovering God," *Concilium* Special Issue (February 1990) 86-102, here 95. Küng (94) taking into consideration the above cited texts of Exodus observes that as the scripture says that anyone who sees God will die, then we can turn the statement and say that only those who die can see God.

he is not punished.³ It means that although the principle of retribution or quid pro quo is supposed to be behind the general pattern of behaviour, as it will be behind the legal concepts of the books of Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, there is something mysterious and exceptional about the way in which God executes his judgment.⁴ The same kind of imbalance can be seen in the very statement of God about himself and his judgment, "... I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exod 20, 5-6; cf. Deut 5,9-10). The exact quid pro quo principle does not seem to function here as well.

3. The God of Job

The Book of Job is one in which retributive justice as attributed to be practised by God is much in question. In it at first Satan raises the question as to what kind of believing it is when one believes for what one will receive in return (Job 1,9-11). Therefore God allows Job to be tested by Satan. Satan tests Job at first by taking away his belongings and his children; finally his very person is touched. The friends who visit Job comfort him and grieve with him. But after three days Job bursts forth, asking, Why does all this have to happen to me? Why does it happen to me and not to others? Job's friends who in the beginning tried to sympathise with him, now criticise him. Their reaction is based on the general and traditional principle defended by Torah: a person's fate is in his hands; what one gets depends on what one does; the just man is rewarded, the sinner punished. But Job contests the traditional view. He denies categorically that his lot is related to his sins in the past. Job wants an encounter with God and answers for his questions. God comes and answers. But God places questions relating to the mysteries of the universe, for which Job has no answers (Job 38,2-16). More to

Of course, it can rightly be argued that there is a certain degree of retributive justice practised as Jacob had to be in exile for twenty years and that he himself had been cheated by his father-in-law, Laban; yet he retains the blessing.

Cf. E. Van Wolde, "Different Perspectives on Faith and Justice: The God of Jacob and the God of Job," *Concilium* (2002/1) 17-23, here 18-19.

our point, God's speech presents a radically different view of justice. Job 38,25-28 makes it clear: "Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground put forth grass? Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew?" Here rain, which in the Bible is normally a clear vehicle of reward and punishment, that is given for good deeds and withheld for bad deeds, is by no means a vehicle of morality. The talk is not about rain, which falls on places where people live; three times the reference is to the rain that falls on uninhabited land, the desert, the waste and desolate land.⁵ Therefore, "[h]ow can God make it clearer that for him ethical categories of reward and punishment have nothing to do with the universe? Why then should human beings think that the moral ideas or the ideas of justice that they have are basis of God's system? There is no retribution of the kind human beings would like."⁶ It means that sheer retributive justice is thoroughly placed in jeopardy in the Book of Job. There is something mysterious about the way God is a judge and about the nature of his justice.

4. The General Vocabulary of God Judging

Although retributive justice does not seem to function in all its strictness in God's dealings with Jacob, and the very idea of God practising such a justice is effectively contested in the Wisdom tradition represented in the book of Job, still that seems to be behind the pattern of God's action as seen in the historical narrative part of the Old Testament. Yet the retributive justice tradition does not seem to stand at times. To get into the heart of the matter we need to examine the general vocabulary of judgment as those words are also used in connection with God, for he is Lord, Judge and Saviour. God judges his own people and other nations in history, and at the end (*eschaton*) of history. Generally the verbs *dîn*, *ykḥ*, *nqm*, *rîb*, *špt* and their cognate noun forms are used in the OT for the judging work of God.

4.1 *dîn* = to judge

The root *dîn* originally designated precisely authoritative, binding

5 Cf. Van Wolde, "Different Perspectives," 20-22.

6 Van Wolde, "Different Perspectives," 22.

judgment in a legal procedure. Passages in which Yahweh is the subject of *dîn* the meanings exhibited are “to pronounce judgment” and “to create justice” (substantivally “legal claim”).⁷ Hence God judges the individual and his people. First, an individual begs God for judgment (justice) and he receives it (Gen 30,6; Ps 9,5; 54,3; 140,13). To the individual Yahweh appears only as a merciful judge. Then, God judges his people Israel both in the sense of helping or vindicating them (creating justice) (Deut 32,36; Ps 135,14), and that of punishing them (Isa 3,13; Ps 50,4). Yahweh also judges the nations and the whole earth (Gen 15,14; 1 Sam 2,10; Ps 7,9; 9,9; 76,9; 96,10; 110,6). The phrase “the heavenly judgment took place” (*dina’ yethibh*) is characteristic of the Book of Daniel (Dan 7,10.22.26).⁸

4.2 *ykh* = to determine what is right

The root *ykh* with its verbal form and the cognate nouns has the basic meaning of “to determine what is right,” and another meaning “to reprimand.”⁹ The former is the “forensic” usage and the latter the “pedagogic.”¹⁰ When used with God both the meanings are there. Yahweh is the source of justice; he is the supreme plaintiff and judge, on behalf of his people Israel (Ps 50,8.21; Isa 1,18; Mic 6,2) and individuals (Gen 34,42; 1 Chr 12,18; Job 13,10; 16,21; 22,4), and even on behalf of the nations of the world (Isa 2,4; Mic 4,3).¹¹ God also reprimands the supplicant (Ps 105,14; 1 Chr 16,21; 2 Sam 7,14), evil doers (Ps 94,10), those who add to God’s word (Prov 30,6). But such reprimands are issued primarily to those whom God loves (Prov 3,11f.)

7 G. Liedke, “*dîn*, to Judge,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (ed. E. Jenni – C. Westermann) (tr. M.E. Biddle) (Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson, 1997) I, 335-336.

8 V. Hamp, “*dîn*, to Judge,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, III, 189-192, here, 192.

9 G. Liedke, “*ykh*, to determine what is right” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (ed. E. Jenni – C. Westermann) (tr. M.E. Biddle) (Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson, 1997) II, 542-544.

10 Cf. G. Mayer, “*ykh* [and cognates],” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, VI, 64-71.

11 Mayer, “*ykh* [and cognates],” 68.

so that the person whom God reprimands is blessed (Job 5,17).¹² That is why such reproof is considered instructional or pedagogical.

4.3 *nqm* = to avenge

In Hebrew the root *nqm* in its verbal form *qal* means to “to avenge, avenge oneself, take revenge,” in niphal “to avenge oneself,” or “be avenged,” in piel “to take vengeance” and in hitpael “to avenge oneself.” Two substantives derived from the verb are *nāqām* “vengeance” and the feminine abstract *n^cqāmā* “vengeance.”¹³ The original meaning of the root *nqm* may have been legal. Punishment rectifies and thus cancels an injustice. As a legal measure it may also include blood vengeance (see Exod 21,20f.). God primarily punishes his people for breach of covenant (Lev 26,25; Isa 1,24; Jer 5,9.29; 9,8; Ezek 24,8), but he also avenges any individual’s transgression (Ps 99,8). He avenges the blood of his prophets (2 Kgs 9,7). He also punishes Israel’s enemies, however, and thus avenges his people (Num 31,3; Deut 32,35.41.43) especially in the exilic and post-exilic prophets (Isa 34,8; 35,4; 47,3; 59,17; Jer 46,10; 50,15.28; 51,6.11.36; Ezek 25,14.17; Joel 4,21; Mic 5,14; Ps 149,7). The *yôm nāqām* / *n^cqāmā* “day of vengeance” (Isa 34,8; Jer 46,10) means comfort for the sorrowful people (Isa 61,2; 63,4). Individuals frequently ask God for vengeance (Judg 16,28; Jer 11,20; 15,15; 20,12; Ps 79,10); thus the people need not exercise retribution themselves (1 Sam 24,13), and the righteous may rejoice (Ps 58,11).¹⁴

4.4 *rīb* = to quarrel

Yet another important verb of judging is *rīb*, which in general means “to quarrel.” In the OT *rīb* appears in three areas of life and language: extra-judicial, pre-judicial and judicial conflict. In the extra-judicial conflict *rīb* indicates the dispute between individuals or between groups. In the pre-judicial group it may primarily be identified by pre-judicial speech forms in the context. In the judicial conflict *rīb* designates the “hearing

12 Liedke, “ykh, to determine what is right,” 543.

13 G. Sauer, “*nqm*, to avenge,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (ed. E. Jenni – C. Westermann) (tr. M.E. Biddle) (Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson, 1997) II, 767-769, here 767. For a more extended treatment of the verb and its cognates see. E. Lipiński, “*nqm*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, X, 1-9.

14 Sauer, “*nqm*, to avenge,” 768-769.

of a dispute before the court”, usually the entire legal process.¹⁵ *Rīb* can be used in connection with God in all three areas of life and language: e.g., extra-judicially, Deut 33,7; Isa 19,20; 49,25; pre-judicially, Isa 45,9; Jer 12,1; judicially 1 Sam 24,16; Isa 3,13. Yahweh can be either subject or object of *rīb*. Yahweh as subject occurs primarily in the individual psalms of lament, i.e., God should or does dispute with the enemies of the suppliant (Ps 31,21; 35,1,23; 43,1; 119,154; Lam 3,58); it also occurs in the communal lament (Ps 74,22), in the announcement of salvation (Isa 49,25), and in the announcement of judgment against the foreign nations (Jer 25,31; 50,34; 51,36). Yahweh also appears to render legal assistance in Deut 33,7; 1 Sam 24,16; 25,39; Isa 19,20; 51,22; Jer 11,20; Mic 7,9. In the prophecies of the 8th/7th century Yahweh disputes with his own people (Isa 3,13; 27,8; 57,16; Jer 2,9; Hos 4,1; 12,3; Mic 6,2).¹⁶

4.5 *špt* = to judge

špt in its most common use designates an action that restores the disturbed order of a (legal) community. It conceives generally of a triangular relationship: two people or two groups of people whose relationship is not intact are restored to the state of *šālôm* through a third party's *špt*. Accordingly, from the viewpoint of the objects of *špt*, *špt* has the first nuance to condemn (e.g., 1 Sam 3,13; Isa 66,16), then “to declare innocent, to help one gain justice”. Deut 25,1 makes this clear: “Suppose two persons have a dispute (*rīb*) and enter into a litigation (*mišpāt*) and then the judges decide (*špt*) between them, declaring one to be in the right and the other to be in the wrong”. But *špt* also has the aspect “to deliver”, as confirmed by the phrase *špt mīvyādekā* in 1 Sam 24,16b; 2 Sam 18,19. The restoration of community order is not only a one-time act but a continuous activity, in order to preserve constantly *šālôm* and thus *špt* acquires also the meaning, “to govern, to rule.” Hence “to judge Israel” in the Book of Judges (3,10; 4,4 etc.) assumes the meaning “to govern over Israel.” Indeed *špt* parallels *dīn*, *rīb*, *ykh* and *nqm*. At the same time *špt* is the normal word for “judging” in the

15 Cf. G. Liedke, “*rīb* to quarrel,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (ed. E. Jenni – C. Westermann) (tr. M.E. Biddle) (Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson, 1997) III, 1232-1237, here 1233-1235.

16 Liedke, “*rīb* to quarrel,” 1236.

OT. The participle *šōpēt* occurs as an official title, “judge”, beginning with the time of the middle monarchy and then particularly in the texts from the Southern Kingdom.¹⁷

The cognate noun *mišpāt* indicates the act of doing *špt* (e.g., Deut 16,18; 1 Kgs 3,28; Jer 5,28). But even *mišpāt* cannot just be limited to the legal sphere. It is more than the legal act. The frequent parallelism of *šedeq* / *š’dāqâ* and *mišpāt* indicates that like *š’dāqâ*, *mišpāt* should be understood as a sphere (*sedeq*: Isa 16,5; 26,9; 32,1; 51,4f.; Hos 2,21; Zeph 2,3; Ps 72,2; 89,15; 97,2; Job 8,3; 29,14; 35,2; Prov 1,3; 2,9; Eccl 5,7; *š’dāqâ*: Isa 5,7; 9,6; 28,17; 32,16; 35,5; 54,17; 56,1; 58,2; 59,9; Jer 4,2; Amos 5,7.24; 6,12; Ps 33,5; 36,7; 99,4; 106,3; Job 37,23; Prov 8,20; 16,8).¹⁸

The theological use of the words from the root of *špt* is not distinct from the other usages. With Yahweh as subject of *špt*, it indicates authoritative “judging.” (e.g., Gen 16,5; 18,25; Exod 5,21; Judg 11,27; 1 Sam 24,13.16; 2 Sam 18,19; Isa 33,22; Jer 11,20; Exek 7,3.8.27; Ps 7,9; 9,9.20; 10,18; 26,1; 35,24; 43,1; 50,6; 58,12; 67,5; 75,3;.8; 82,1;.8; 94,2; 96,13; 98,9; Job 21,22; 22,13; 23,7; Lam 3,59; 1 Chr 16,33 2 Chr 20,12). The request in Solomon’s prayer dedicating the temple that Yahweh “judge your [his] servants, condemning the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding them according to their righteousness” (1 Kgs 8,32) indicates that *špt* of the court in the gate does not differ from the *špt* of God, and it is exactly as it is conceived of in Deut 25,1, which we mentioned above. But the passages from the Psalms cited above suggest the concept of Yahweh as Judge as he is the Creator and Lord of the world. From this *špt* also comes the term for the proclamation of the eschatological salvation and judgment. It becomes the proclamation of the saving order in Isa 2,4 = Mic 4,3; Isa 51,5 (for the nations); Ezek 43,17.20.22 (for Israel), but judgment in 1 Sam 3,13 (for the house of Eli); Isa 66,16; Jer 25,31 (for all flesh); Ezek 7,3.8.27; 11,10f.; 18,30; 24,14; 33,20; 36,19 (for Israel); Joel 4,2.12 (for the nations); Ps 75,3 (for the evil doers).¹⁹

17 Cf. G. Liedke, “*špt* . to judge” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (ed. E. Jenni – C. Westermann) (tr. M.E. Biddle) (Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson, 1997) III, 1392-1399, here 1393-1395.

18 Liedke, “*špt*, to judge.” 1395-1396. 19 Liedke, “*špt*, to judge.” 1397-1398.

4.5.1. A Saving Judgment

This last aspect that Yahweh's judging becomes the proclamation of salvation for his people, and even for the nations requires further attention, for the *mišpāt* of God in the OT cannot merely be conceived in terms of God being Creator and Lord, but in terms of a God who has bound himself in the Covenant to his People, Israel. Because Yahweh has entered into a covenant with his people, the justice worked out in his judgment is not a *iustitia distributiva*, but a *iustitia salutifera*.²⁰ In this perspective the primary orientation of *mišpāt* becomes religious rather than ethical. Many instances bear witness to this. For example, Hos 6,5b-6 "... and my judgment (*mišpāt*) goes forth as light. For I desire steadfast love (*hesed*) and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings"; and Zeph 3,5 "The LORD within it is righteous (*saddîq*); he does no wrong. Every morning he renders his judgment, each day without fail; but the unjust knows no shame." The religious aspect of the term is emphasized by combining it with *hesed* (mercy) and *s'daqâ* (justice / righteousness).²¹ This being the case, some passages point to a change of meaning in *mišpāt*. The term takes the sense of grace and mercy. Isa 30,18 explicates this fact: "Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of Justice; blessed are all those who wait for him." But here it should be noted that this is more than the execution of judgment for the poor and the oppressed, as may be the case in 1 Sam 24,16b; 2 Sam 18,19, which we have indicated above; indeed the relationship of judgment to the needy and oppressed is something belonging to the very legal concept of justice, that is, it is materially implicit that the Judge should execute justice for those who have no rights (cf. Exod 23,6; Deut 24,17; 27,19; Ps 146,7; Job 36,6; Isa 10,2; Jer 5,28). That which goes beyond the legal content of justice is indicated in the places where *mišpāt* includes the divine act that includes the remission of sins for human beings (Ps 25,6ff.; 103,6ff.). For forgiveness is in tension with justice as this is expressed in the doctrine of individual retribution (cf. Ezek 18). It also seems to call in question

20 V. Herntrich, "The OT Term *mišpat*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, III, 923-933, here 926.

21 Herntrich, "The OT Term *mišpat*," 927-928.

the basic tenet that the prosperity of the people and the individual is linked with the observance of the *mišpātîm* (ordinances) of Yahweh.²² This in a way coincides with what we have observed above in the discussion of the book of Job. For Hertrich rightly says, "The answer which the author of Job gives to the question of the righteousness of God's judicial action is that one cannot speak of Yahweh's *mišpāt* when man begins with his *mišpāt*, but that execution of justice by Yahweh is something which defies comprehension and which calls for submission and trust."²³

We have to yet another aspect here, for if Yahweh's *mišpat* is done in his *šedāqâ* (justice / righteousness), there is Deutero Isaiah who considers the latter two terms as synonymous to the derivations of the root *yš'*: Isa 45,8; 46,13; 51,5 [*šedeq*]; 56,1; 61,10; Ps 71,15.²⁴ The parallelism in Isa 46,13 makes the equation very clear: "I bring near my righteousness (*šid'qânî*), it is not far off, and my salvation (*wûr'sû'ânî*) will not tarry." It means that after the Exile, the understanding of God's justice / righteousness turned out to be a "saving justice / righteousness," which would acquit people even when they are guilty, and not punish them, in the retributive way.

4.5.2 The Cause of the Nations

We need to consider the *mišpāt* of Yahweh towards the nations too, for if judging is part of the office of a ruler then Yahweh's rule over the nations should also mean his judging over them. Isa 40,14 suggests that *mišpāt* is an expression of Yahweh's universal action. Judgment on the nations, seemingly forming part of the OT eschatology (cf. Amos 1,3-2,16; Isa 1,2; Jer 1,14ff.; 25,15ff.; Mic 1,2ff.; Zeph 3,8ff.; Joel 3,2ff.; Mal 3,2ff.), is the negative side of Yahweh's world dominion. Even here there is a positive aspect. Thus in the first Servant Song in Isa 42,1-4 it is part of the task of the Ebed to bring *mišpāt* to the nations. The bringing of *mišpāt* means salvation for the nations and mercy for the oppressed. In Isa 51,4 the task which the Ebed received in 42,1-4

22 Hertrich, "The OT Term *mišpat*," 929-930.

23 Hertrich, "The OT Term *mišpat*," 930.

24 Cf. F. Stolz, "yš', to help," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (ed. E. Jenni C. Westermann) (tr. M.E. Biddle) (Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson, 1997) II, 584-587, here 586.

is fulfilled by Yahweh himself. He will cause his *mišpāt* to shine as light to the peoples. The term “light” used with judgment means that it is salvation.²⁵ All the more significant is the fact that in the next verse (51,5) Yahweh’s righteousness (*sedeq*) is identified with his salvation (*yš’*): “I will make *my justice* come speedily; *my salvation* shall go forth....” (*The New American Bible*). The parallelism makes it clear.

Now, in our treatment of the vocabulary we came across the phrase *yôm nāqām* / *nēqāmā* “day of vengeance” (Isa 34,8; Jer 46,10) and from Daniel the clause that “the heavenly judgment took place” (*dina’ yethibh*) (7.10.22.26). It is in the prophets that we meet with the talk of the “Day of the Lord” which will be a Day of Judgment, of which we need to glimpse through further.

5. The Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment

One of the distinctive marks of the people of God of both Old Testament and New Testament times is that they had their gaze set towards the future. While the other people lived with an understanding of recurring natural cycles, Israel was ever thinking of the salvation that was to come. The prophets proclaimed this salvation as coming at the imminent end (*eschaton*) of the present era, and hence the salvation expected was qualified as “eschatological.” The prophets gave it different names: the Day of Yahweh, the Judgment, the coming of the Messiah, the kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem, the Resurrection.²⁶ Judgment indeed is a theme which appears in the presentation of the “Day of Yahweh” in the prophets and we need a brief investigation of it.

The oldest biblical oracle on the Day of Yahweh is in Amos (5,18-20), coming from the eighth century B.C.E. He was the first also to proclaim that the “end” (*haqqêš*) (8,2) was at hand. By this what Amos meant was the doom (end) of the kingdom of the Northern Israel. There was no concept as yet of the end of the world. Speaking out against the self-centred brand of religion of the people Amos proclaimed the Day of Yahweh as the day of “darkness”. Amos announces the judgment of God against the sinfulness of his people and the surrounding nations (1-2) and predicts chastisement. Only a small remnant will be spared (3,12; 5,15; 9,8). He reminds Israelites of their covenant obligations

25 Hertrich, “The OT Term *mišpat*,” 932-933.

26 A. George, “The Judgment of God,” *Concilium* 1/5 (Jan 1969) 6-12, here 6.

(3,1-2; 9,7-8). Therefore the proclamation of the impending Day of Judgment was meant to restore fidelity to the covenant rather than describe the future. In the centuries that followed other prophets used poetic hyperbole to expand the notion of the "End" and the "Day of Yahweh" into a day of cosmic judgment.²⁷

Shortly after Amos, Isaiah worked in the kingdom of Judah and he proclaimed the day of the Lord (2,9-11). He too denounced the sinfulness of Israel, such as the luxury of the nobility (e.g., 2,7; 3,16-24), superficial religion (29,13), lack of faith (5,8-19; 6,9-10), and so on. But unlike Amos he allowed more room for hope, stressing the notion of the remnant (7,3; 8,18; 37,31-32), and proclaiming the coming of the Messiah (11,1-9; 9,1-6). The oracle of Isaiah 13, describing the Day of the Lord to be visited on Babylon dates from the sixth century B.C.E. Here although the prophet is concerned with the destruction of a specific city, Babylon, his language evokes a catastrophe of cosmic proportions (13,9-13).²⁸ All the same his announcement of the impending day was a summons to conversion, faith and justice. In the seventh century B.C.E. Zephaniah portrayed a Day of Yahweh (1,14-18), which would involve a military catastrophe for the nation for its idolatry. He too looked for the salvation of a remnant (3,11-13). At the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E., Ezekiel proclaimed the Day of the Lord on several occasions (7,10; 13,5; 30,3). He envisions a Babylonian invasion (17,12-21; 21,23-32). He sees it as chastisement for idolatry and other crimes (6,8; 7,23; 20,13; 22,11). But upholding God's justice in this chastisement, he stresses individual responsibility and the salvation of the upright (9,4-6; 14,12-20; 33,10-20).²⁹

However, following the Babylonian Exile we find increasing cosmic imagery in the oracles of judgment, that we are not able to pin down the exact historical references. Some of the examples are found in Isa 24-27. Significantly here we find in a faint way the language of

27 J.J. Collins. "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Volume 1. The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity (ed. J.J. Collins) (New York, NY/ London: Continuum, 2002) 129-161, here 129.

28 Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism," 130.

29 Cf. George, "The Judgment of God," 7.

resurrection too: "Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. Odwellers in the dust, awake, and sing for joy!" (26,19). Resurrection of the dead is used as a metaphor for the restoration of Israel in the vision of the valley full of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, which dates from the time of the Exile. But lack of historical specificity is the characteristic of many eschatological oracles from the post-exilic period. For example, Ezek 38-39, where the prophet conjures up the fantastic figure of Gog from the land of Magog. Another example is that of Joel 3,9-16, where God judges the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat. What is significant here is that these passages were probably composed with specific crises in mind. But as we do not any longer know the historical circumstances, the oracles take the character of general eschatological predictions that evoke an expectation of the end of history, which may or may not be imminent.³⁰

Thus in the prophetic tradition the Day of Yahweh is God's intervention in history to pass judgment on his people and on the nations; he will save the ones who are faithful to him and re-establish due order. They depict the event sometimes as being brought about by a catastrophe in history (e.g., military invasion or natural plague). But in the post-exilic period the expected judgment takes on a general character that cannot be fixed to any known historical events, so that they are supposed to take place at the end (*eschaton*) of history.

6. Judgment in the Book of Daniel

The book of Daniel presents the last and most complete proclamation of divine judgment in the Hebrew canon. It inaugurates a new genre in the biblical writing, namely, the apocalyptic genre. An apocalypse is defined as "genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."³¹ This definition is applicable to the book of Daniel. As seen in the definition, eschatology is characteristic of the

30 Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism," 130131.

31 J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*. An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic literature (Grand Rapids, MI/ Cambridge, U.K.:Eerdmanns, Dove, 2 1998) 5.

genre; but that was characteristic even of the prophetic tradition; however the distinctive novelty of the genre is the belief in the judgment of the dead. Daniel might still proclaim an eschatological kingdom of Israel, but it also promised that the faithful would rise in glory, and thus offer a perspective on life, quite different from the Hebrew prophets.³²

Daniel presents several pictures of the final days. Sometimes he uses imagery (chap. 2: the dream of the statue; chap. 7: the vision of the Son of Man), and a prophecy (chap. 10-12). To interpret Daniel it is better to begin with the prophecy. Here the data given can be identified with the history of the epoch. In chapter 11 the history of pagan rulers are narrated in prophetic form: the Persians (11,2-4); the successors of Alexander in Egypt and Syria (11,5-20); in particular, Antiochus IV Epiphanus, who reigned over Syria from 175-164 B.C.E. (2,21-45). Antiochus' war with Ptolemy VI (11,25-29), the intervention of Romans (11,30) and Antiochus' attack on the Jerusalem temple and his persecution of Jews (11,31-39) are all precisely described. However, when the end of the impious king is described the vision abandons the recitation of known historical facts (11,40-45). It relates his end to the transcendent events at the end of time: the great tribulation and intervention of Michael, the head of the heavenly hosts (12,1); the resurrection of the dead to eternal life or everlasting contempt (12,2-3). This oracle is the first and certain affirmation of the resurrection of the dead to appear in the Hebrew canon. Daniel's oracle depicts the resurrection as a prelude to judgment that will end the persecution by Antiochus. Although the oracle does not make it clear whether this resurrection applies to all humankind, it alludes to divine judgment, chastisement and reward. Daniel wishes to affirm God's triumph at the end of the persecution, and his transcendent judgment on human beings beyond the grave.³³

The vision of the beast and the Son of Man (chap. 7) presents the same idea in symbolic form. The beasts are pagan kingdoms and in final judgment they do not stand. Salvation is described in terms of the Son of Man: power over all the nations of the world is entrusted to him (7,13-14). He is the human being *par excellence*, true humanity as

32 J.J. Collins, "Early Jewish Apocalypticism," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, I,283.

33 Cf. George, "The Judgment of God," 8-9.

opposed to the pagan kingdoms symbolised by the beasts. After undergoing persecution, the Son of Man receives eternal dominion over all the nations. Although resurrection is not mentioned, it is implied. Now, the portrait of judgment in Daniel extends and surpasses all preceding predictions of the Day of Yahweh. As in the early prophets, it takes place in history. But it marks the end of history, because it is judgment that affects the dead too and thus is situated in a new world.³⁴ In short, the Day of Yahweh in Daniel becomes a day of judgment.

7. Jesus and the Gospels

Jesus used most of the eschatological themes to be found in the Old Testament, such as the great tribulation, the resurrection, the coming of the Son of Man, the Judgment, the eternal fire, life eternal and the kingdom of God. It may rightly be said that these are not merely eschatological themes, but also apocalyptic. There has been much discussion from the last decade of the 19th century whether Jesus' teaching had been apocalyptic.³⁵ But as A. Yarbro Collins argues, if Jesus' teaching on eschatology included the activity of the heavenly "son of man" foretold in Daniel 7, it would be appropriate to speak of his teaching as apocalyptic.³⁶ Indeed an apocalyptic hope is expressed in the sayings about the return of Jesus from heaven as the Son of Man (e.g., Luke 12.40 = Matt 24.44). Further, in the eschatological discourse in Matthew there comes the phrase "end of the age" (24.3), "the sign of the Son of Man" (24.30) and the reference to the loud trumpet call that will accompany the sending out of the angels to gather the elect (24.30).³⁷

Moreover, the vision of the Son of Man as Judge, who "will sit on his glory" is again apocalyptic in character, presented in a manner that is indebted to the *Similitudes of Enoch*, a thoroughly apocalyptic work.³⁸ It is discussed much as to whether the judgment of the nations as

34 George, "The Judgment of God," 9.

35 In this regard see Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 256-264; D.C. Allison, Jr., "The Eschatology of Jesus," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Volume 1. The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity (ed. J.J. Collins) (New York, NY/London: Continuum, 2002) 267-302.

36 A. Yarbro Collins, "Early Christian Apocalypticism," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, I, 288-292, here 289.

37 Cf. Yarbro Collins, "Early Christian Apocalypticism," 289-290.

described in Matt 25,31-46, called also the parable of the Great Assize, although not a parable in itself except vv. 32-33, stems from Jesus, from Matthew, from the early church or from Judaism. In any case, the passage reflects Jesus' own concern for preparing oneself to enter into the kingdom. One of the main problems in the understanding of the passage is with regard to the criterion of the judgment. One naturally asks whether the line of thought is meant to re-establish the criterion of justification by good works. But there are arguments militating against such a position. First of all, we should remember that the teaching of Jesus was not organised in a systematic form. His emphasis on charity here does not mitigate his summons to belief and acceptance of the gospel.³⁹ Further, it cannot be interpreted as if neither faith in Christ nor membership in the church is necessary for salvation. For we should remember that it is addressed to Christian disciples, and discipleship is understood in a very bold way as identical with the care of the needy. Thus it is not a denial of faith; it is the essence of faith.⁴⁰

Despite these explanations the aspect of *quid pro quo* seems to linger in the picture of the judgment presented by this scene of Matthew. Indeed it is not at all bad to paint a bleak picture of the inevitability of God's judgment in terms of punishment. At the same time, as we have seen above, Job's refusal to give in to the temptation that there exists a connection between concrete evil and suffering hints at an alternative vision in which the divine is conceived to relate to a morality not by a retributive justice of reward and punishment but by graciousness.⁴¹ We have also pointed to the latter understanding in our explication of the *mišpat* of God. J. Williams tries to summarise the two poles and point to the tension existing between them. She says: "Within the corpus of judgment speech, we find mutually contradictory visions of universal damnation and of universal salvation. We are all damned. This is the great affirmation of the tradition that stretches from Paul to Augustine

38 See Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 268.

39 George, "The Judgment of God," 10.

40 B.T. Viviano, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (ed. R.E. Brown – J.A. Fitzmyer – R.E. Murphy) (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1991) 630-674, here 669.

41 J. Jans, "Neither Punishment nor Reward": Divine Gratuitousness and Moral Order," *Concilium* (2004/4) 83-92, here 85.

and Luther.... Nevertheless, we are all saved—a lesser tradition, but clearly a part of the mainstream of faith, stretching from Paul's vision of the re-creation of the whole cosmos, through Origen and into the present-day supporters of universalism such as John Hick and Jürgen Moltmann, whose great insight is that nothing less than universal salvation can vindicate the love of the creator.”⁴² In this latter perspective Jans seems to interpret the judgment scene in Matt 25. He highlights the apparent “a-theism” both in the acts mentioned and the intentions of the actors, and says: “To inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world turns out to be sufficient to feed the hungry and quench the thirst, to welcome the stranger, to dress the naked, to take care of the sick and to visit the prisoners. Also, this morality is anonymous and gratuitous on two counts: those who do the right thing are unaware of the revealed meaning within the goodness they practised, and apparently the Son of Man is not revealed to them in the least of the members of his family.... The list given by Matthew is clearly neither comprehensive ... nor is it suggested that each and every one of these good deeds is required. This might shed some light on the place of eternal fire and punishment prepared at the left-hand side of the king. For is it impossible to imagine a life worthy of ‘moral judgment’ without one single act just for goodness’ sake on behalf of one of the least? May be the ‘eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’ remains empty.”⁴³ This interpretation again is in keeping with the observation of Williams that “among both the churches and unchurched society, evil and virtue are never unmixed; even the greatest among us know their own unrighteousness, while even the most corrupt are capable of acts of humanity and love.”⁴⁴

However, there arises a question then as to the import of the passage of Matthew on judgment. The answer in keeping with the message of Jesus all through the gospels is that it was a call to conversion. As Allison observes, “... Jesus’ focus was not on depicting judgment but on drawing out its ramifications for behavior in the present. When he warned that one would be taken, another left (Luke 17:34-45 [...]), he

42 J. Williams, “Judging Judgment. An Apophatic Approach,” *Theology Today* 58 (2002) 541-553, here 549.

43 Jans, “‘Neither Punishment nor Reward,’” 90-91.

44 Williams, “Judging Judgment,” 550.

did not elaborate on how that would happen. The point was instead to get people to change their behavior."⁴⁵ Therefore, the prospect of a final judgment, then, leads to no evasion of responsibility in this world, but rather lends urgency to ethical behaviour.⁴⁶

8. The Book of Revelation

The apocalyptic genre takes its name from the Apocalypse of John, one of the later books of the New Testament, written towards the end of the first century C.E. It is the first book in the Jewish and Christian tradition presenting itself as *apokalypsis* (1,1). The content of the book is focused on the eschatological scenario that culminates in the end of this world and the judgment of the dead. What is very particular is that it takes the death and resurrection of Jesus as the central Christian event, which leads to the modification of the structure of eschatology, insofar as the career of the Messiah is both past and future.⁴⁷

The last judgment is depicted in Rev 20,11-15. This is the second or general judgment. The first resurrection is referred to in Rev 20,4-6. The second resurrection involves all the dead, except those who rose in the first resurrection. The earliest clear reference to resurrection in the Bible, as we saw above, is Dan 12,2, where the expectation is that many will rise. A general resurrection is expected in *1 Enoch* 51,1; Acts 26,23; 1 Cor 15,20. In verse Rev 20,12 is said, "...books were opened... and the dead were judged according to their works as written in the books." In Jewish apocalyptic writings, the idea is attested that angels record the deeds of other angels and of humans as evidence for the final judgment (e.g., *1 Enoch* 89,61-64). But verse 12c speaks of another book, "[a]lso another book was opened, the book of life," and verse 15 complements it, and "anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire". The "books" mentioned at first is the record of the human beings, come for judgment, while the second, "book of life," is the register of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; it is the "book of life" of the Lamb (see Rev 3,5; 13,8; 17,8; 21,27). The problem is with the criterion of judgment. Here "we are faced with the mystery of salvation: people are judged by their deeds.

45 Allison, Jr., "The Eschatology of Jesus," 283.

46 Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 268.

47 Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 276.

and yet salvation is a free gift (v. 15)."⁴⁸ In fact the text retains a certain amount of tension, which has never been fully solved. What is implied is that God has created humans as free beings, and freedom is costly for it entails responsibility. Our deeds have eternal consequences, as we are judged by them. But God is responsible for our salvation; it is his deed (grace) that saves us: "[J]ustified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3,24).⁴⁹ Taking note of the tension in the text, Harrington rightly concludes quoting E. Schillebeeckx:

'It is an unimaginable scenario for me as a Christian, familiar with the gospel, that while there is said to be joy among the heavenly ones, right next to heaven people are supposed to be lying, gasping for breath and suffering the pain of hell for ever (however you imagine this—spiritually or physically). On the other hand, the idea of the second or definitive death respects God's holiness and his wrath at the evil that is done to the detriment of the poor and the oppressed' (...). If living in communion with God is the foundation of eternal life, the absence of such communion is the basis of non-eternal life. There is no longer any ground of eternal life. 'That seems to be the "second death" of the fundamental, definitive sinner (if there is such a person). That is "hell": not sharing in eternal life; it does not mean someone who is tortured eternally; rather it means no longer existing at death. That is the biblical "second death" (Rev 20:6)' (...).⁵⁰

We should therefore conclude that although the book of Revelation seems to depict a quid pro quo criterion for final judgment, even in it there come the aspects of the grace of God, which puts the usual and general criterion for judgment at stake. What might therefore be implied in the picturesque presentation, as in Matt 25, is again one of a call to conversion.

9. The Apocalyptic Eschatology in Paul

We stepped into the arena of Paul in our discussion of the book of

48 W.J. Harrington, *Revelation* (Sacra pagina 16; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1993) 204.

49 Cf. Harrington, *Revelation*, 205.

50 Harrington, *Revelation*, 205-206. The quotations in Harrington's words are from E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (London: SCM, 1990) 137.

Revelation. Whereas the Gospels and the Book of Revelation make picturesque depictions of (last) judgment, the genuine Pauline letters, which chronologically preceded the former, assume more a reflective thought-pattern, although not fully and always bereft of descriptive touches (e.g., 1 Thess 4,16-17).

Introducing the letter to Romans, B. Byrne thinks, as a number of other present day exegetes do,⁵¹ that Paul presupposes an adherence on part of his audience to the eschatological perspective of Jewish apocalypticism. The main trait of the perspective was the expectation of a more or less imminent divine judgment of the world, in which the issue of salvation was to be decided. Therefore Paul makes considerable play on the emotions of fear and hope evoked by that expectation (Rom 1,32; 2,1-11; 3,19; 5,1.9.11; 7,24-25; 8,1.31-39; 9,22; 13,11-14; 14,10-12). The language of divine "wrath," "justification," "righteousness," "condemnation" and "liberation" has its locus in this framework. The hope was to be "saved" from the "wrath of God" by being found "righteous" (= being justified) at the final judgment (Rom 2,3-16; 5,9-10; 8,2. 31-39).⁵²

As Paul's preoccupation is that of "judgment" and "salvation," M.C. De Boer asks the question as to whether Paul believes that all human beings will be saved at the end. The question arises from seemingly irreconcilable statements, which Paul makes even in the same work. For instance, in 1 Cor 1,18 Paul writes that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved [i.e., for Christians] it is the power of God." This statement seems to imply a limited salvation, as do others (e.g., 1 Thess 1,10; 4,13-18). In 1 Cor 15,22, however, Paul claims that "as all die in

51 See, for example, B.R. Gaventa, "God Handed Them Over: Reading Romans 1:18-32 Apocalyptically," *Australian Biblical Review* 53 (2005) 42-53.

52 Cf. B. Byrne, *Romans* (Sacra Pagina 6; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1996) 21. With regard to the two patterns of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, the "cosmic" apocalyptic eschatology and the "forensic" apocalyptic eschatology, and the consequent difference in understanding between R. Bultmann and E. Käsemann, as to which of the two have been adopted by Paul see M.C. De Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Volume I. The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity (ed. J.J. Collins) (New York, NY/London: Continuum, 2002) 345-383, esp. 357-366.

Adam, so all will be made alive [saved] in Christ.” Here salvation appears to be universal as elsewhere (cf. Rom 5,12-21).

Going further into the issue, first of all, it is to be asked whether Paul sees the sinful actions of Christians as that which can and will put their ultimate salvation at risk, as some of the texts emphasising individual responsibility and accountability seem to imply. For instance, “For all of us [Christians] must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor 5,10); “For we [Christians] will stand before the judgment seat of God.... So then, each of us will be accountable to God” (Rom 14,10,12) (see also 1 Cor 3,17; cf. Rom 2,1-16; 1 Cor 24-10,13). De Boer answers in this respect that while Paul regards salvation as under threat in the short term before the *parousia*, it is doubtful that he regards it thus in the long term as well (Phil 1.6). According to De Boer, although Christians will be held accountable for what they do, their works have no effect on their salvation in the long term as salvation is not a human achievement or “work”. Of one thing De Boer is sure that salvation in the present is constantly under threat, and hence one ought not to be presumptuous in this regard as passages like 1 Cor 4,8; 9,24-10,13, esp. 10,12 (cf. Rom 11,18-22) warn.⁵³ As to the fact that the assurance of salvation for the Christian may not be doubted, De Boer appeals to 1 Cor 5,1-10, where Paul advises a person to be excommunicated (“handed over to the Satan for the destruction of the flesh”), for gross sexual immorality, “so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (5,5). De Boer thinks that this handing over to Satan is only temporary and provisional; otherwise it would not make sense in saying that the intention was to save him on the day of the Lord (*parousia*).⁵⁴ In any case, this is a very difficult text whose tension does not seem to be solved fully. What Paul intended by the expulsion of the man from the community was for the extinction of his false orientation. Moreover, 1 Cor 1,8 attests to the fact that if believers are to obtain a favourable eschatological judgment, it is due to God’s assistance.⁵⁵

53 Cf. De Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 371-372.

54 Cf. De Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 372.

55 Cf. J. Murphy-O’Connor, “The First Letter to the Corinthians,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (ed. R.E. Brown – J.A. Fitzmyer – R.E. Murphy) (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1991) 798-815, here 800. 803

The second question is with regard to the salvation of all. In De Boer's view, in 1 Cor 15,21-22 and Rom 5,12-21, both of which contrast the work of Christ with that of Adam, salvation seems to be universal. De Boer counters all who try to understand 1 Cor 15,22, "all will be made alive in Christ," in a way other than the universal. Some try to interpret this clause in terms of the following verse (15,23) which mentions "only those who belong to Christ" as being raised at his second coming. De Boer argues by pointing mainly to the parallelism involved in 15,21-22:

through a human being, death
through a human being, *resurrection of the dead*.

In Adam, all die,
In Christ, *all* shall be made alive.

The parallelism here requires that the "resurrection of the dead" encompass "all" people.

Still some scholars, accepting the parallelism, think that all shall be raised, of which some will be to salvation and others to damnation. But De Boer seeing that here "resurrection of the dead" is parallel with "all shall be made alive," argues that all shall be raised to salvation, for elsewhere Paul uses the verb "to make alive" (one word in Greek, *zopoieo*) as a synonym for "to save" (Gal 3,21; Rom 4,17; 1 Cor 15,45; cf. 15,36), and hence it is quite likely that he does so even here.

Another group of scholars argue that what Paul means in 15,22 is "all who are in Christ", i.e., only the believers. But the grammar and syntax do not support that view, nor the parallelism with "in Adam, all die". Moreover, such an interpretation raises also another question as to how Christ's work can be *less cosmic* with respect to making alive, while that of Adam is totally cosmic in making all die.⁵⁶ By these arguments De Boer upholds the universal character of the judgment to life that will happen on the day of the Lord, *parousia*. Although the text in its style seems to be all inclusive, universal and positive, it is not easy to be conclusive about the interpretation. A. Robertson and A. Plummer think that "[i]t is ... precarious to argue that 'in Christ all shall be made alive' implies that all humankind will at last be saved."⁵⁷ W.E. Orr and

56 Cf. De Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology," 372-373.

57 A. Robertson – A. Plummer, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2 1911) 353.

J.A. Walther admit that the wording of the Greek supports the interpretation that "all people will be made alive because of Christ," but Paul's theology from elsewhere (e.g. Rom 6,5-11) suggests the second interpretation that "all people who belong to Christ will be made alive". They conclude saying that, in any case, the desolate condition of death, the common human lot, is subject to removal because of the marvellous victory achieved through the human agency of Jesus Christ.⁵⁸

10. Conclusion

We have tried to have a glimpse of the Bible enquiring into the concept of God as Judge and the nature of his judgment, i.e., the criteria by which God judges. Indeed the idea of retributive justice respects God's holiness and his wrath at the evil that is done to the detriment of the poor and the oppressed, as Schillebeeckx observed above. Yet it seems difficult to come to conclude, as is also attested in the Bible at several occasions, that God the supreme Judge who judges persons and nations in history, and would finally judge all at the end of history adopts a *quid pro quo* criterion. Nonetheless men and women here on earth cannot lead their lives as if God's judgment will not be retributive, for as Paul says, "[A]ll of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Cor 5,10). The Christ-event has assured us, however, that God would be merciful in his judgment, for he has brought near his justice, which is his salvation (cf. Isa 51,5). What is affirmed in the Christ-event is that the judge will not at the end turn hostile. Of this one can be rather positive when one puts explicitly his faith in Christ, and faith is a relationship than an act or "work". Such a faith, though not explicit, may not be considered as absent in any human being, for it seems impossible to conceive the life of a person without one single act of love for the least ones. The analysis made here does not want to come to definite conclusions, but indicates the various perspectives from which the concept of God as judge has been conceived and how it has evolved in the Bible.

Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy
Carmelgiri, Alwaye – 683 102

58 W.E. Orr – J.A. Walther, *1 Corinthians* (AB 32; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1976) 332.

“When We Cry, ‘Abba, Father...’ ”: Biblical Revelation of God’s Fatherhood

Augustine Mulloor

The study begins from the present context of the abuse of fatherhood (and motherhood) in modern families. Then it identifies the expressions and attitudes of God as Father beyond the use of the word “Father” in the salvation history reaching the revelation of God as Father of Jesus. The reflection is meant to create impulses for the reconsecration of fatherhood (motherhood) in our families

Introduction

The trend-shifting discussion on God the Father has to be situated in the controversy regarding the historicity of the Gospels having the point of departure in the historical skepticism initiated by R. Bultmann.¹ The counter-position was advocated by J. Jeremias especially through the study of the Aramaic substratum of the Gospels above all through the investigation into the deeper implications of the word “Abba” in the Jewish and Old Testament context.² The whole orientation of the research in this case was regarding the originality of the usage especially in the

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1. Cfr. R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, London, 1963. “Bultmann’s form – critical investigations ... must lead to judgments on the historicity of the stories and the genuineness of the saying found in the tradition. His skepticism regarding historical reliability is evident...” J.S. Kselman and R.D. Witherup, “Modern New Testament Criticism”, in: *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1138.
 2. J. Jeremias, “Kennzeichen der ipsissima Vox Jesu”, in: *Synoptische Studien* (Fs. A. Wikenhauser), München, 1953, 86-93; *The Prayers of Jesus*, Philadelphia, 1964.

mouth of Jesus.³ This led always to Christological reflection and conclusions about the authenticity of the texts and the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship with God.⁴

The scope of this article is not to enter into all the complex intricacies of such scientific technical discussions but to journey through the biblical narration and to identify the various progressive moments in the revelation of God's Fatherhood expressed in various ways at different important moments of salvation History. It may be articulated in the words uttered by God, in His behaviour and in His actions. We shall make this journey pausing at important junctures of salvation History and reflecting on major traits of each period and dwelling upon a selected text or texts.

We shall prologue our study making ourselves aware of a social context namely the prostitution of Fatherhood in the modern families.

1. Prostitution of Fatherhood Today

We are living in a society in which the unit that is worst hit by the modern culture is the family. The family crisis has its root in the irresponsibility of the parents especially of the father. More concretely today the fatherhood is being abused in the families. If the father himself hands over his daughter for prostitution, is he not prostituting his fatherhood? If a Father lets his children be abused willingly by his friends and colleagues, is it not prostitution of his fatherhood? Many a deviation experienced in the lives of the young men and women have been traced back to the abuse they have experienced from their parents especially father or from their supposed patrons. There are also indications of a new kind of relationship that has developed between fathers and children which may be better characterized as "friendship" in which no much relevance is given to the spirit of respect and fear, rather they behave like friends and peers. Accordingly the picture of God the Father has been tainted by this sad and deplorable phenomenon in the familial context of today. The society has become fatherless and the children replace the father with money, pleasure and violence.

3. Cfr. R.E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Vol.I, New York, 1994, 172-175.

4. Cfr. E. Schillebeekx, *Jesus – An Experiment in Christology*, London, 1979Pp.256-271; R. Hemmerton-Kelly, "God the Father in the Bible and in the experience of Jesus: The state of the Question", in : J.B. Metz, E. Schillebeekx (Eds.), *God as Father*, (Concilium 143/3), New York, 1981, Pp.102-105.

The demand is for a return to the authentic understanding of the image of God the Father as revealed in the biblical tradition.

2. Fatherly God, the Creator and Provider

The pre-history that presents a salvation-historical explanation for the situation of human life marked by violence, conflicts, murder, exploitation, corruption, disunity, immortality, pride, jealousy and sin, reveals that God is the creator and the creation is an act of love and the love implies providing for creation.⁵ Hence the relationship between God and the created realities is like creature – creator in the formal sense; Nevertheless, essentially it has to be that of Father and son (child).

The act of creation is the overflowing of the very existence of God and his very nature i.e. love. It is the act of sharing of one's life. Hence it is the expression of fatherhood of God. In the first account of creation (Gen 1,1-2,4a) the creation of human being is the crowning moment and the solemnity and importance given to this act is an expression of God's fatherly attitude. To create human being in God's own "image and likeness" is the revelation of the fatherhood of God as the humans have the very same nature of God himself. In the second account (Gen. 2, 4b-25), the human being is presented as God's partner and the keeper of God's garden. The status enjoyed by the human being is that of a member of the family. God's reaction to the loneliness of the human in a very positive way is another expression of the Fatherly concern of God.

If Gen. 3,15 is taken as "Proto Evangelium" in the Christian tradition, the Fatherhood of God is implied in the text because while pronouncing the judgment over the guilty in the first sin, God is not unconcerned about the future of humanity. His Fatherliness is in the same vein also in Chapter 4 in the proclamation of judgment over the murder of Abel.

The flood story is the articulation of human way of understanding God's decision to recreate a world that was corrupt and violent. Into this narration is inserted a beautiful image of a God, who like a Father of looks on Noah with favour, remembers him and blesses him (Gen 6,8; 6,13; 7,1; 8,1 and 9,1). In the Covenant made by God with Noah and through him with the whole universe (Gen 9,1-17) God's paternal providence is manifested. The story of Babel is the narration of Children's

5. Cfr. C. Wistermann, *Genesis I – II*, London, 1984; B.W. Anderson (Ed.), *Creation in the Old Testament*, Philadelphia, 1984.

rebellion against the Father. How can children replace Father? The unique position of God the creator, provider, recreator and liberator is all synthesized in the position of God as the Father.

So although the word never occurs, and God is never addressed as Father, in the prehistory there is a very strong implied image of God's Fatherhood expressed in attitudes, actions, behaviour and so on. In the later stages, we find more explicit expressions of God's Fatherhood.

3. God the Father in the Patriarchal History

In this part of Jewish history again we don't find any direct usage of the designation "Father" for God. However, the Fatherhood of God is revealed in the behaviour and actions of God in the implied and unpronounced form.

In the patriarchal history we encounter a God of call, promise and election. All the three themes imply the image of God who takes initiatives to establish and reestablish and flourish a relationship. All the three themes contain the Semantic significance of self-offering. It is in this spirit, attitudes and actions of God that we find the latent picture of God, the Father.

When God calls Abraham, he appears as the Sovereign, almighty and demanding God (Gen 12, 1f.). But in the same action of God we find a spirit of accomplishment. Abraham who set out of his country leaving his kindred faced the crisis in the absence of a descendent. The attitude of God in this predicament of Abraham manifests the true Fatherly concern God has for him (15, 1f.). This is further concretized in the attitude of God to Abraham in the context of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18). The freedom Abraham enjoys before God is expressed both in the words of God and in the bargain he makes for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18, 17-19; 22-33). God takes Abraham as a family member and Abraham feels totally free like a child before the Father.

The Fatherly nature of God is revealed in his concern for Hagar and the son, now lost in the wilderness of Beersheba. The words of God's messenger are: "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not!" (Gen 21, 17). The same paternal concern is found in the reaction of God to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only Son in silent obedience to God's command "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him" (Gen 22, 12).

The image of a God who like a Father disciplines the children even through unexpected suffering, unjust circumstances and apparently empty, absurd and meaningless decisions, emerges from the words of Joseph in the presence of his brothers in Egypt (Gen 45, 4-5). Joseph is referring to the action of his brothers against him as they sold him out to Egyptians. For Joseph this was only a providential event led by God for the preparation of the future security of the people of Israel. "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here for God sent me before you to preserve life" Gen 45, 4-5. If we ask, what kind of God did Joseph experience in his difficult time the most suitable trait will be that of Fatherhood.

To Jacob who is struggling to decide to go to Egypt or not, God reveals himself as a Father who accompanies him to Egypt. "I am God, the God of your Father, do not be afraid to go down to Egypt... I will go down with you to Egypt..." (Gen 46, 3-4).

So the God who guides the history of patriarchs, is the Lord of history, the sovereign creator but at the same time a very loving Father who makes everything good, accompanies persons, takes responsibility, gives assurances of help and protection, guarantees the future.

4. God the Father: Exodus – Conquest Period

The period of exodus is the time of formation of the people of Israel as the people of God. Hence the period is characterized by the definition of their identity, which implies also the definition in their understanding and experience of God. With exodus the image of a God who is the liberator of the people emerges as a predominant feature. He is the God of the poor and God of justice, which is the expression of authentic love. His liberative programme in favour of the people of Israel is realized through his identification with the fate of the people (Ex 3,7-8). This is the context in which God identifies himself as the "Father" of the people.

When God gives instruction to Moses concerning his mission for Israel, God asserts that Israel is his first-born. "And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, Israel is my first born son and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, behold I will slay your first-born son"' (Ex 4,22-23).

The significances of God's fatherhood in relation to the people of Israel is to be taken in terms of the origin and development of Israel.

God is the one who has begotten or generated Israel and takes the responsibility for the people, as a Father for the son.⁶ The book of Numbers describes an event in which God manifests his responsibility as Father, in this case more as mother, for the people of Israel as Moses refuses to take that responsibility as he asks God: "Why hast thou dealt ill with thy servant? And why have I not found favour in thy sight that there dost lay the burden of all this people upon me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I bring them forth that thou shouldn't say to me. Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries the sucking child..." (11,11-12). In response to Moses, God takes responsibility for the people and feeds them with meat in the wilderness. The words of God to Moses crystallize the feelings of concern emerging from the responsibility of paternity: "Is the Lord's hand shortened? Now you will see whether my word will come true for you or not" (Numb 11,23).

In the book of Deuteronomy there are 4 texts which are relevant: 8,5; 14, 1-2; 32, 6.19-20.

In 8, 5 the author is trying to induce Israel to remain obedient and faithful to its divine instructor. The fatherly guidance of God which Israel has experienced for a long period of time especially during their sojourn in the wilderness is the basis of this challenge.⁷ Those experiences were God's way of disciplining his own children, training them sometimes through scarcity, sometimes through blessings to reach a maturity.⁸ Israelites are addressed "Sons of God" in 14, 1-2. This is unique to Deuteronomy. It may be asked if early Israel in the cult language address God as Father? Normally it must have no sacral or cultic connotation. Here the 2nd verse is parallel to the first"

You are the Sons of Lord, your God.

You are a people holy to the Lord your God.

Therefore the Sonship here implies holiness and holiness signifies being set apart by God and for Him. So "being sons of God" means "being singled out for Yahweh and being inviolable deriving from this".⁹

6. J. Galot, *Abba Father*, Mumbai. 1998, 58-59.

7. Cfr. G. Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, London, 1966, p.72; J. Galot, *Abba - Father*, Pp. 59-61.

8. Ibid., p.71.

9. Cfr. G. Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 101.

Naturally the reference to Sonship is the linguistic medium to give expression to the special relationship between Israel and Yahweh.¹⁰

5. God, the Father: In the Monarchical Period

The Shift to monarchy was a turning point in the history of Israel. It gave them the experience of God's protection in a concrete way. Yahweh's kingship on the basis of the covenantal relationship remained intact. The Israelite King was considered to be a person with very intimate relationship with God.¹¹ This relationship is redimensioned by the external covenant which God is said to have made with David for the establishment of his dynasty (2 Sam 23,5). The Kings of Judah were inheritors of this divine promise (2 Sam 7, 5-16). According to this promise the Davidic King would be "Son" of God not through procreation, as it was understood in Egyptian culture, but by adoption. The King would remain a descendant of David by nature, but a 'Son of God' by adoption (2 Sam 7, 12).

2 Sam 7, 1-29 and its parallel 1 Chron. 17,1-27 are relevant texts as God speaks of himself in these texts as Father to the descendent of David through whom his dynasty will be eternally established. This is the oracle of Prophet Nathan. The promise of divine protection is the peculiar characteristic of eternal dynasty of David, according to the oracle. The sons of the future King will be punished and thereby God will be like a Father to the Son. The sphere has been shifted from the historical to the messianic from the time there was no King.¹² So the historical root of the Messianic expectation is this promise given to David, playing on of the semantic themes, House, dynasty and temple and emphasizing the character of perpetuity.¹³ So here the fatherhood of God has reference to filiation both in terms of Israel and the Messiah.

10. Cfr. G. Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 196.

11. The different aspects of the problem of Divine Kingship in Israel and there textual bases are summarized in: S. Szikszai, "King, Kingship", in: *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol.3, p.15. The following texts are relevant: 2 Sam 1, 14-16; 1 Sam 26,9; 1 Sam 24, 5; 2 Sam 19.21-22; 1 Kgs 21, 10-13; 2 Sam 14,17-20; 19, 27.

12. Cfr. H.W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, London, 1964, Pp. 286-287.

13. Cfr. A Alt, *Kleine Schriften II*, Pp.63f., H.F. Campbell, J.W. Flanagan, "1-2 Samuel", in: *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 156.

However this is not to be understood in terms of generation but in reference to the gift of fatherly love which is ever and unfailingly faithful.

6. God, the Father in the Prophetic Writings

In the teaching of the prophets the presentation of God as Father finds focused attention. The major occurrences are in the books of Isaiah, Hoseah, Jeremiah and Malachi. Their main concern being the "return" of Israel to the fidelity of the covenantal relationship,¹⁴ the paternal aspect of the relationship becomes a very persuasive language to motivate the people for transformation.

When Isaiah begins the book with a controversy of God against the people the main accusation is formulated using the language of Fatherhood "... Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Is 1,2-3). God claims to be the Father of Israel but Israel does not behave like a son. Their rebellious and stiff-necked attitude is contrasted to the respectful and docile attitude of the ox and ass to their master. Such attitude of faithless and "sinful people calls into question the very fatherhood of God."¹⁵

Is 63,15-16 and 64, 8 are similar in content. Structurally they both belong to the same unit. Is 63,7-64, 11 is a community lament in the form of a Psalm.¹⁶ These texts have their background in the post-exilic period and by then in the use of "Father" as address to God had lost the danger of being taken mythologically in terms of physical fatherhood of gods in the cultural background of Israel.¹⁷

People experience a feeling of "loss" because their whole existence is dependent upon God's mercy and when that is lost, they feel lost. This failing is substantiated in the confession of confidence with the words, "... for thou art our Father..." It is clarified that God is the Father of Israel not like Abraham and Jacob are Fathers of the nations. "God is a living and present Father. He knows, he acknowledges, he

14. Cfr. G. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol.2, London, 1965.

15. Cfr. J. Galot, *Abba-Father*, p.61.

16. Cfr. C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, London, 1966, p.386.

17. Ibidem p. 393.

sees; what makes him Israel's Father is the fact that men may call upon him and that he can turn in grace towards his chosen people... For the chosen people there is only one vital Father. "Our redeemer from of old is thy name" (Is 63, 16).¹⁸

Is 64, 8 is different in this that it emphasizes the Children's attitude introduced with the adversative "yet" (waw Heb). Whereas in Is 63, 16 the accent falls on God being the Father. In the present text it is articulated that Israel in her straits or in her burdens of iniquity turns to the Father, namely God.¹⁹ To avoid any misunderstanding of physical fatherhood, the following sentences speak of creator-creature relationship: "... we are the clay and thou art our potter we are all the work of thy hand" (Is 64, 8). In the next verse, there is a parallel expression serving as the powerful motivation for confidence: "we are all thy people" (Is 64, 9).

Is 30, 1-9 speak of Israelites as rebellious children.

Jer 3, 19 contain the imagery of Fatherhood of God. But the context has more the imagery of adultery (3,1. 5-20). Both are aiming at the expression of deep relationship between God and Israel. God is her husband. God is also the Father. As Father he wanted to give Israel the best of everything. Then Israel should call God "Father" and not turn away from him. The depth of infidelity is presented through depth of relationship in terms of Father and Son.

In Jer 31, 20 the intimate and deep Fatherly feeling God has for Ephraim is expressed with the words: "... my dear son, a child in whom I delight..." This is equal to "my darling child". What is translated as "my heart yearns for him" is as follows in the literal Hebrew sense: "my bowels rumble for him." It is like the stomach being churned up with longing for the Son."²⁰

In Mal 1, 6 and 3, 17 the language of Fatherhood is used in a metaphorical way.

Hos 11, 1-4 deserves special attention. The text has been interpreted more in terms of motherly love of God. But here there is a very strong imagery of God's Fatherhood expressing tenderness and care unmatched

18. Ibidem.

19. Ibidem p. 397.

20. Cfr. J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, Grand Rapids, 1985, 575.

in the Old Testament. The prophet is tracing back the historical tradition of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel which demands a return back to the exodus context. The prophet gives to this "love – relationship beyond the sexual-cultic setting of Canaan, a historical locus in the imagery of "Father – Son".²¹ This has a very strong Jewish family background. Unless a Father accepted an infant was nobody in the Jewish society. "Touched, took in his arms, blessed, laid hands on" are expressions that point to the actions of a Father designating the newly born. When a child is deprived of such an experience, the situation is horrifying because that Child is nothing, nobody, non-person in the Mediterranean world of paternal power.²²

Read in this background, the actions mentioned in 11,1 are three fundamental expressions of Fatherhood: teaching to walk, taking up in the arms, bending down and feeding (Hos 11,3-4). God is leading Israel in a meditation on the past experiences of their journey together, especially bringing to perfect focus the unfailing responsibility, commitment and tender concern as that of a Father to the Son.

7. God, the Father and the Sapiential Literature

In the Psalms rarely the terminology of Father-Son is employed. In Pss 103, 13 and 89, 26 the relationship with God has been characterized by paternal – filial feelings and attitudes Ps. 27, 10 the imagery of human Father and Mother is employed to show that God's love and concern transcends that.

There are two Psalms in which this language is used to present the nature of the intimate relationship the Messiah has with God. Ps 2 and 110 are traditionally interpreted Messianically. And the three aspects fathered, namely, paternal love, generation and resemblance are affirmed.²³ The Psalmist has excluded the physical begetting which could have been confused with ideas existing in the surrounding cultural milieu of Israel so that it may not imply any idea of divinization of the King.²⁴

21. Cfr. J.L. Mays, *Hosea*, London, 1969, p. 153.

22. Cfr. J.D. Crossan, *Jesus: A revolutionary Biography*, San Francisco, 1994, Pp.62-64. The author cites an example found in a papyrus letter discovered in Egypt.

23. Cfr. J. Galot, *Abba-Father* p.66.

24. Cfr. A Weiser, *The Psalms*, London, 1962, p.113.

In the late wisdom literature the vocabulary of Father-Son relationship is employed to describe the experiences of individual believers (Prov. 3, 11-12; Sir 22, 27; 23,1; Wis 2, 13-18; Wis 5, 4-5; 6,7; 14, 3). In the Sapiential tradition a just man is called "Son of God". But, beyond the earthly life, this Sonship can refer also to the future immortality enjoyed by a person in fellowship with God.²⁵

8. Jesus and God, the Father

The revelation of God as Father is the decisive element of the experience of the person of Jesus and also the distinctive element of the teaching of Jesus. The personality of Jesus and his spirituality is centred on his "Abba" experience. The fundamental radical expressions in Jesus' life and mission just as the prayer – attitude, solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, the cry for justice in confrontation with the rich and the powerful emerge from this centre.²⁶ This is based on the assumption that Jesus used the address "Abba" to God is distinctive and caritative expressing the intimate, familial and familiar relationship, transcending the existing general relationship in the contemporary Judaism.²⁷ But the singularity of usage in the mouth of Jesus was not merely because it was different from the contemporary Jewish way but in employing the Jewish familial language in addressing God and thus reinterpreting and deepening the Jewish concept itself.²⁸ Jesus crystallized the core of his relationship with God in this usage, not only the confidence innate to a child but also the acknowledgement of God's authority and its obedience to Him.²⁹

25. Cfr. J. Galot, *Abba-Father*, Pp. 63-64.

26. Cfr. A. Mulloor, Jesus' God experience as model of communication and Action", in: *The Living Word* 100 (1994) 192-219; A. Mulloor, "Prayer as model of communication in the Gospels", in: *Jeevadhara* XXXIII/194 (2003), 133-141.

27. Cfr. R. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Vol.I, 172; J. Barr, "Abba, Father" and the familiarity of Jesus' speech", in: *Theology* 91 (1988) 173-179; W. Marchel, *Abba, Pere, La Priere de Christ et des Chreties*, Rome, 1971.

28. Cfr. A Mulloor, *Jesus' Prayer of Praise. A study of Mt. 11,25-30 and its communicative function in the first Gospel*, Delhi, 1996, Pp 74-75; F.Leutzen-Deis, "Beterkraft des Gebetes Jesu", in: *Glaube und Leben* 48 (1975) 164-178; W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison Jr., *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Vol.1, Edinburgh, 1988, Pp. 600-602.

29. G. Dalman, *Dei Worte Jesu*, Leipzig, 1930, p.62.

The background of a Jewish family and the unique role played by the Father in the family is very important to understand this.³⁰ The Father has the responsibility to teach the law to the Son until he is of age before the law. This was true especially about the basic tradition of faith namely Deut 6,4f. Whatever is taught by the Father would be authentic too since the responsibility of handing over other tradition is something sacred and the tradition should be preserved and handed over in its purity and pristine simplicity. Hence the answer: "My Father taught me" is an argument to prove the authenticity. So in the experience of Jesus, what used to happen in Jewish family because of the paradigm of experience and expression. Thus when Jesus was questioned by the Jews about the source of his knowledge and wisdom and power and its authenticity, Jesus referred back to the Father: "my teaching is not mine but his who sent me..." (Jn 7,16).

The usage of the word "Abba" in Mk 14, 36 as well as in Gal 4,6 and Rom 8, 15 shows that the Aramaic form was familiar to the Greek converts too probably because it was considered a venerated expression. "One is justified in claiming that Jesus' striking use of "Abba" did express his intimate experience of God as his own Father and that this usage did make a lasting impression on his disciples"³¹ In Mt 11, 25 (Lk 10, 21) the intimacy is combined with supreme authority, as the address is "Father, Lord of heaven and earth."

The teachings of Jesus revealed the various dimensions of the image of God the Father, doing whose will was food for Jesus, (Jn 4, 34), who was always concerned about his Father's business (Lk 2, 49) and finally commended himself to Him (Lk 23,46). The perfection or mercy of the Father is the ideal of the disciples (Mt 5, 48; Lk 6, 36). He is the provider of everything (Mt. 6, 25-34). He is the merciful and tolerant Father and just judge (Mt. 13, 24-30). He is the unprejudiced and compassionate shepherd (Mt. 18, 10-14). In the Lord's prayer where the ideal image of God as Father, King, Provider, forgiver, protector and judge, the very synthesis of the new righteousness (Mt 5, 17-20) is synthesized as life of communion in the family of God under the

30. Cfr. F. Lentzen-Deis, "Jesus the authentic bringer of faith", in: A. Mulloor (Ed), *Faith, Culture, India today, Perspectives*, Kalamassery, Pp. 109-110.

31. J.P. Meier, "Jesus", in: *NJBC*, 78, p.1323.

Fatherhood of God. Thus the experience of God as Father becomes the very foundation of Christian experience and basis of authentic fraternity and universal communion. The parable of the prodigal son is a synthesis (Lk 15, 11-32).

9. God, the Father and Mother

It is important not to leave out the feminist question that is related to the Fatherhood of God: Why God is not called Mother? Taking into consideration the cultural milieu of patriarchal system prevalent as the context of the development of biblical traditions, we must say, they imply the motherhood. So in the Father is present implicitly also the mother. Hence it is baseless to speak of discriminatory language or exclusivistic language.³²

10. Reconsecration of Fatherhood in the Society Today

We began our reflection reminding ourselves of the prostitution of fatherhood in the society today. Going through the pages of the biblical revelation of God as Father, we have found the basis for the reconsecration of Fatherhood in the society today which in turn will provide the pragmatic impulses needed for the renewal of the families and through the families for the establishment of a new humanity. The hope of the new community of authentic brothers and sisters centred on the Fatherhood of God is possible only in this way.

Carmelite Theology College

Manjummel – 683 501

32. Cfr. Catherina Halkes, "The Themes of Protest in Feminist Theology against God the Father", in: J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeekx (Eds.), *God as Father*, (Concilium 143/3), New York, 1981, Pp. 103-110.

Book Review

Kuncheria Pathil, *Trends in Indian Theology*, ATC Publications, Bangalore, 2005, pp. 177, Price Rs. 120.

The author of this book: *Trends in Indian Theology* is a well-known Indian theologian who knows the subject he deals with. The Book is a small one, but very relevant - a masterly, critical approach to theological developments in India, its various trends, agenda and articulations. "Every new generation has to struggle and give an account of their faith in their own times, in response to their context and new challenges" (p.10). This is what exactly he is doing throughout this book of six chapters and 177 pages. The first chapter is on "An Indian Theology, a Historical Survey" which runs up to 50 pages. Divided into three parts, this survey does a very praiseworthy work by giving us brief but very reliable accounts of theologizing in India, in the context of (1) cultural, philosophical and religious realities, (2) socio-economic and political realities and (3) contemporary scenario of pluralism and convergence. The author does justice to one of his own passing statements written down in this survey: "India's rich religious experience, our time-old tradition of harmony among the plurality of religions, the nation's resolve to construct a new society based on equal justice and freedom for all, and our strong commitment to eliminate poverty and misery, and solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, all these were seen as constituent parts of the 'new humanity' given in Jesus Christ" (p. 42). Accordingly this survey briefly comments on our time-old religious pluralism, philosophical heritage, beginnings of Indian Christian theology, Christian ashram movement, emergence of socio-economic consciousness, Indian theology of liberation, voice of the woman theologians and the dalit theology etc. The survey concludes with a sad, but yet hopeful, tone that our attempt to carve out various dimensions of Indian theology is not in its brightest sunshine due to several ecclesial or institutional limitations in the centers of theological formation; yet hopeful, because

of the emergence of new faculties of theology in India, new consciousness of human dignity and equality to all as a priority in all Christian agenda (pp. 60-61).

In the second chapter the author deals with our missionary call, its relevance along with our obligation to see "the seeds of the Word lie hidden in the cultural and religious traditions of the people" (p. 72/AG no. 11). The author quotes several papal documents on mission and proclamation and clarifies the mission's central role and its various paths, such as, witnessing, proclamation, dialogue, liberation etc. "Evangelization or the mission of the church is one, namely, partnership in the realization of God's plan of salvation in history and beyond it. This one mission and its goal is reached through different paths" (p. 78/Redemptoris Missio, nos. 41-60).

In the Third Chapter the author traces three stages in the Christian approach to other faiths in which they are looked upon as: 1."merely man-made, magic-dominated manipulation of the divine" (p. 91), 2."containing truths and human values" and hence deserve a positive consideration and 3. "accepted 'ways of salvation' to their believers" (p. 92). Even a great saint like Francis Xavier was not free of the negative impressions the missionaries maintained in the above first stage. opportunity', he was only echoing the attitude and thinking of the church of his times" (p. 91). Today's church has made great progress in its understanding of other religions. In this historical review, Pathil gives us certain glimpses of the biblical, the ancient and medieval catholic writers' views on other religions. The protestants' formula *sola fide*, *sola gratia* and *sola scriptura*, as well as the well-known dictum "outside the church there is no salvation" are also discussed. Coming to the modern period the schools of Theo-centrism and Christo-centrism are treated very briefly. In conclusion he says: "It is the task of Christian theology to continuously struggle to relate the revelation in Christ with revelation else where in other religions, peoples and their cultures. ... All religions have to make a common pilgrimage and be committed to an open process of dialogue and collaboration for a better humanity and for the fullness of truth" (pp. 115-116).

In the Fourth Chapter, "Theology of the Kingdom and Christian Identity" is proposed for discussion. Three points are presented: 1.the theology of the kingdom of God, 2.relation between the kingdom and

the church, and 3. the question of Christian identity. The theology of the kingdom is developed from the use of the word 'kingdom' in the Old and New Testaments and Jesus' subtle correctives to the nationalistic and political over-tones given to the concept of the kingdom (p. 122). "Kingdom of God is a present reality... However, kingdom of God transcends the present world and is also a future reality" (p. 124). The dynamics of the kingdom is therefore, the present should always be judged and transcended by what was revealed in the past in Jesus and what we hope to come in future. It is in constant struggle for realizing God's will upon the earth. As an earthly reality it is deeply related to the church and as our church is made of human individuals, finally it is a question of our own Christian identity, which is well defined by the council of Jerusalem as "'faith in Christ' and the presence of and 'obedience to the Holy Spirit'" (p. 131/Acts 15). All other things discussed in the chapter also we need, but most of them are subject to change. Things that are subject to change are important, as far as the living church is concerned. Hence, Pathil treats the question of inculturation, something that should happen as the kingdom of God takes shape in any land. Fifth Chapter is mainly a review of the historical process of inculturation down through the centuries, namely, from the period of intense inculturation (1-800 AD), the period of centralization (800-1600 AD), the period of cultural colonialism (1600-1900 AD) and the period of re-discovery (900 AD...). In his concluding remarks on this chapter he rightly says: "inculturation happens spontaneously and naturally when a Christian community lives its faith in its own cultural settings in an open and dynamic relationship. Inculturation cannot be fabricated by some experts in some isolated liturgical centers or libraries. It is by and large the work of the entire Christian community, of course, members having different roles in the process" (p. 153).

The final Chapter is a "Rethinking on Theological Education in India". This chapter begins with a discussion with the late theologian Sebastian Kappen whose writings have shed much light on some of the irrelevant aspects of our contemporary theological education and the need of re-thinking of the same today. Then three models are proposed for this purpose: 1. in the socio-economic, 2. religio-cultural and 3. ecumenical contexts of India. In the third section the sad story of divisions in the church is very concisely, yet touchingly, presented. Thus the ecumenical context is made clear (pp. 167-174).

I very much appreciate what Pathil has said in and through this small but solid book. Pathil does not claim to have made any new discovery in this book. This is not the purpose. But it opens our eyes and leads us through the real issues centering on or deeply pertaining to our theological issues in India. Each issue is treated first by a short and substantial appraisal of what has been done so far, and then by a smart look into the present, all, well analysed, summarized and documented, followed by his own concluding remarks by way of suggestions or materials for future discussion. The style of writing is lucid and clear and you do not need a second reading to follow his text. I find this a very good book, not occupying much space, but supplying us with much information with regard to ecclesial and theological events in India, with accurate historical dates and ecclesiastical documents. I would recommend this as a book, handy enough, for immediate reference regarding many of our most relevant theological issues, much discussed in India today.

Vidya Vanam Ashram
Bangalore

V. F. Vineeth